

# The Parish Church of St Michael & All Angels Meeth, Devon

## Disabled Facilities Available

Many thanks to:  
**Photographs** by Richard Proctor, Simon Cartidge and Gary Young  
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 Hamford  
**Meeth Parochial Church Council**, especially churchwardens  
 Ingrid Dodd and Beryl Toop, and fabric co-ordinator Jennifer Green

[www.northmoorteam.org.uk/meeth](http://www.northmoorteam.org.uk/meeth)



*Do not let love & fidelity  
 forsake you;  
 bind them around your neck,  
 write them on the tablet  
 of your heart.  
 Then you will find favour and  
 good repute in the sight  
 of God and of people*  
 Proverbs 3:3-4



The restored wagon **roof** is mainly C15, with moulded ribs and carved bosses (including those of a merchant, a wheel, and a hammer & spear.

There is a two-light square-head **window** in the sanctuary south wall, and three-light Perpendicular-style windows in the nave south wall and above the altar. The tracery lights in the south window of the sanctuary include stained glass, perhaps medieval. Otherwise windows are plain or opaque glass. The stonework and tracery were seemingly renewed in the Victorian restoration.



The nave and chancel **floors** are Victorian terracotta tiles with mineral glazes. The interior of the church was replastered and wooden flooring replaced in 2012.

The south **porch** is C15, but the inner door (with two semi-circular arches and a frieze of carved motifs above) appears Norman, later restored. The door itself is likely medieval oak, with original lock and key. The porch has a fine wagon roof with bosses: foliage (with a Tudor rose) but also a face. There are benches on either side with notice boards. Mesh doors exclude birds.



The building is surrounded by a large, open **churchyard**, with C18/19 gravestones of grey slate, some with verse inscriptions. The most noted burial is Rev John Lamprière, Rector 1811–24, compiler of the Bibliotheca Classica (1788, still in print). There are other listed monuments and gravestones (EH 93296; 93299; 93297; 437950; 93298).

The churchyard is well maintained by paid and voluntary labour, and in spring wildflowers flourish under the trees. Our children's group sowed many seeds in an area set aside to be natural.

In 1999 a churchyard plan, detailing the location of all the graves, with their names and dates, was completed by Mrs Jill Meredith. In 2009, a place was designated by the vestry for the burial of cremated remains.

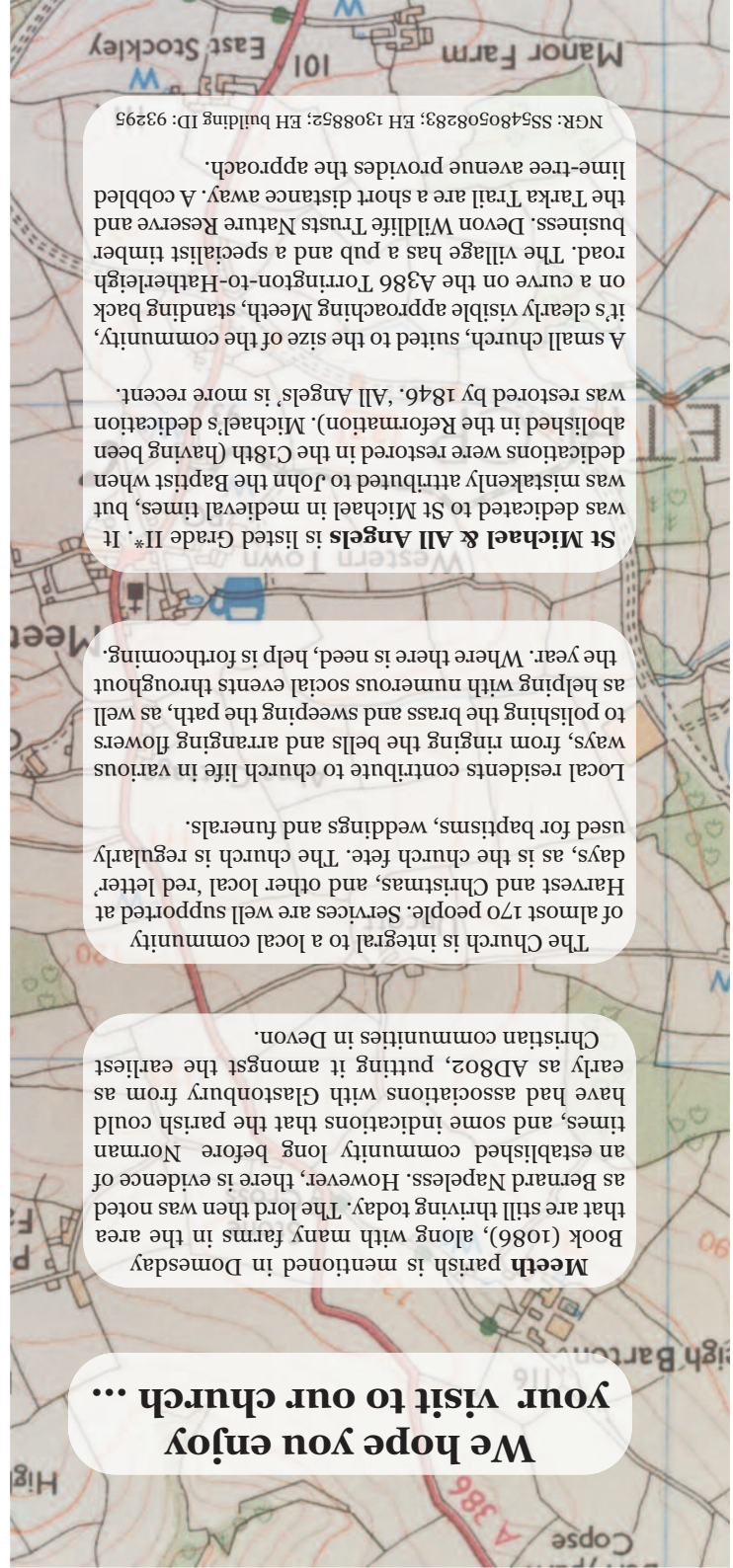


The **pathway** is one of the earliest of its kind. Like several others locally, it was built using pebbles from the River Torridge. Local legend has long insisted that it was built by Napoleonic prisoners-of-war from Dartmoor, but the date (1818) makes this impossible. It was built with local labour.

The three-stage, unbuttressed, square **tower** is of dressed grey granite blocks with four plain pinnacles. Consistent with an early date, there is no west door, but a two-light mullion window with segmented heads. A rectangular stair projection extends half way up the tower's north side, accessed through an oak door of C14 origin. There is a tiny Norman window on the staircase north side.



The remaining church **walls** are mostly stone rubble. The gable-ended grey slate roof was renewed in 1988. Some of the guttering and downpipes are cast iron.



The Church is integral to a local community of almost 170 people. Services are well supported at Harvest and Christmas, and other local 'red letter' days, as is the church fête. The church is regularly used for baptisms, weddings and funerals. Local residents contribute to church life in various ways, from ringing the bells and arranging flowers to polishing the brass and sweeping the path, as well as helping with numerous social events throughout the year. Where there is need, help is forthcoming.

**Meeth** parish is mentioned in Domesday Book (1086), along with many farms in the area that are still thriving today. The lord then was noted as Bernard Napeless. However, there is evidence of an established community long before Norman times, and some indications that the parish could have had associations with Glastonbury from as early as AD802, putting it amongst the earliest Christian communities in Devon.

## We hope you enjoy your visit to our church ...

NGR: SS5480508283; EH 1308852; EH building ID: 93295  
 lime-tree avenue provides the approach.  
 the Tarke Trail are a short distance away. A cobbled  
 business. Devon Wildlife Trusts Nature Reserve and  
 road. The village has a pub and a specialist timber  
 on a curve on the A386 Torrington-to-Hatherleigh  
 it's clearly visible approaching Meeth, standing back  
 A small church, suited to the size of the community,  
 was restored by 1846. 'All Angels' is more recent.  
 abolished in the Reformation). Michael's dedication  
 dedications were restored in the 18th (having been  
 was mistakenly attributed to John the Baptist when  
 was dedicated to St Michael in medieval times, but  
 St Michael & All Angels is listed Grade II\*. It

The **chancel** was extended and a vestry added in 1893. Vestigial stonework for a rood screen may then have been removed. The **vestry** has a door and a piscina in the east wall. A cast-iron strongbox (1813) holds the current church registers; the old ones are in the Exeter archives.

**Archaeological investigation** in 2005 gave various finds within the building debris, including a small section of possibly-medieval floor tile, post-medieval pottery, a C19th glass bottle, and a stone window mullion fragment.

In March 2012, during monitoring works to the south side of the nave, a rubble layer was unearthed and removed. An archaeological excavation by Dr Samuel Walls and Emily Wapshott uncovered the following features:

1. A small hearth for metalwork (bronze?), maybe related to making bells or other fittings for an earlier church on the site. The existence of this early medieval feature beneath the present structure is a rare, chance survival, especially for Devon – evidence of what is likely the earliest foundations of a rural church in Meeth. The fact that the hearth is positioned *inside* and *cut* by the C13th–14th walls suggests that the earlier church structure was thinner and probably shorter than its medieval replacement.
2. A single post/pillar hole, perhaps belonging to the early (thinner) church, but more likely belonging to that part of the C13th–14th phase which was removed when the C15th barrel-vaulted roof was constructed.
3. Three graves, probably from at least two different times. The last is aligned slightly crookedly to the other two. The evidence suggests it was a coffin burial, not a shroud burial as the others likely were. The memorial tablet to Samuel Jerman on the south wall, dated 1735, looks to have been adapted from a floor memorial, and may have derived from one or more of these graves (his wife was buried in 1769).

Subsequent to these burials, two phases of post-medieval building occurred which dramatically altered the fabric of the church, but also helped to preserve the earlier hearth.

Supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and many others, **urgent restoration work** has been done to the tower and bells (2016). New facilities have been installed to aid and enhance our contribution in the local community, and to make the church more comfortable for visitors.



The **altar brasses** consist of a large, fine cross; two pairs of candlesticks; two pairs of flower vases; and an alms dish. The communion cup, donated by then-patron Richard Blinch of Bideford, is silver, hallmarked London 1642/3, with a bucket-shaped bowl and baluster stem. The plain paten appears silver, but with no hallmarks. The silver is not kept in the church, as there is no safe and the church is open daily. The glass angel was presented by the Price of Peace (Hatherleigh).



The oak altar rails are C17, renewed in the C18 and refitted in 1893. The altar itself, choir stalls, lectern, altar brasses and other fittings were either provided or altered during the restoration. There is a **piscina** in the chancel south wall.

The **bishop's chair** and an oak chest were stolen on 30th September 1997. Local craftsman Bob Thompson made this replacement; his wife, Olive, made the cushion.



The **electric organ**, made in Bideford, was installed in 1977.



The **model** of the church was made by Richard Proctor with a meticulous eye for detail – right down to the kneelers, hymn board, bell ropes, and a willow St Michael. It can be lit inside. It was presented to Meeth Church at our Patronal Service in 2015 and blessed by the Archdeacon in a very moving ceremony.



The most eye-catching object in the church faces the door on the north wall of the nave: the **plaster arms** of Queen Anne (276 x 177cm), likely the work of John Abbot of Frithelstock. Restored in 1999 by Torquil McNeilage, it is illuminated by a fixed spot. An inscription at the base reads 'Hannibal Jerman and John Tawton, Church wardens 1704'.



A **marble obelisk** from 1843 depicts an angel carrying deceased Prudence Lamb to heaven.

The **Great War Roll of Honour** drawn by C Andrews in 1919 – ink on card behind glass in a plain frame – is recently restored.

A new **prayer corner** was set up in 2009 for quiet reflection, private prayer and a chance to light a candle

The nave has 18 oak pews, C16 with repairs and replacements. Between 1991 to 2014, ladies in the parish made tapestry **kneelers** for every pew, with red cushions for the choir stalls. In 2000 the Sanctuary-step cushions and new door-curtain were made.



Two of the **bells** are early medieval, from Exeter, inscribed with a cross and the words 'Ave Maria' and 'Ave Maria Gracia' respectively. The other two (1714, by Johannes Stadler of Chulmleigh) are inscribed 'Ring me round, I'll sweetly sound' and 'Soli Deo Detur Gloria' and the names of wardens John Lugg and Sam Jerman. All four have six cannons intact. The oak frame with timber headstocks is by Henry Stokes of Woodbury, 1902. Rehung and rededicated in 1991, and completely refurbished in 2016, the bells are rung regularly for services.



Beside the door is an Early English **font** (1170), with corner shafts and a centre stem; it has a C17 wooden cover.



A square of 131 **ancient tiles** is incorporated in the C19th floor of the tower. They were probably laid in 1893. Most are North Devon relief-decorated tiles of the period 1650–1710. Whilst tiles of this type survive in many churches in north-west Devon, this particular set is unusual, since most of the specimens were made at the recently-discovered Great Torrington kilns, not the better-known centres of Barnstaple and Bideford. Two tiles, however, are attributable to Bideford's North Road potteries, and a few plain unstamped ones of slightly larger size are also present. At least three different episodes of tiling are therefore represented.

In 2000, Shebbear potter Clive Bowen came to help decorate **clay tiles** fired by him. Bob Thompson made the frame. Hung above the choir stalls, the plaque is registered with the National Needlework Archive to mark millenium needlework.



All that remains of the C17 three-deck **pulpit** is a panelled semi-octagon. A watercolour painting of Rev Everard Lamprière, Rector 1823–1888, in the old pulpit, was damaged by damp. It was restored in 1999 by Susan Crowes, but is no longer on display.

The **willow figure of St Michael**, made by Sally Vick, was presented to Meeth Church in 1999 and restored in 2008.



A 1758 **slate tablet** commemorates former churchwarden Samuel Jerman, who left money in trust for the village poor, plus 10/- pa for a sermon to be preached each year on the anniversary of his burial, 6th December (a tradition recently revived).



A C17th oak **alms box** is attached to the south wall by an iron wall stand.



. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS MEETH

