Stained glass window on south side of chancel (top).
Church lit for a service (bottom) (Photos by Larrie Barlow)

A local historian and church member, Catherine Meadows, penned this affectionate tribute:

L Lonely, hidden in green meadows,
O On the edge of Roman Fosseway,
W Wrought within a fold of Cotswold,
E Ere the dawn of distant Domesday
R Rose a village in the fields,
rose a church which stands today.

L Long years of history these stones have seen
E Erected here nine centuries ago;
M Men who built before the Normans
I In rustic grange where cattle low,
N Ne'er could have dreamed that in this age
G God's house would still awaken to cock's crow.
T The cannon balls and war so bloody
O Once gave here such a savage blow;
N Neither broke the yeoman spirit,
neither ceased the Limen's flow.

West Window

St. Leonard's Today

St. Leonard's is now in the same parish as St Thomas à Becket, Todenham, and is part of the group of five churches which comprise the Moreton Vale benefice, including also St. David's Moreton, St. Mary's Batsford and St. James's Longborough.

Services are held at Easter, Harvest and Christmas, along with the occasional wedding, funeral or baptism. But the church is also open every day for visitors.

St. LEONARD'S

LOWER LEMINGTON

Lemington Church

The beautiful church of St. Leonard's Lower Lemington is Norman and dates back to the 12th century. Whilst the community has always been small - at its most no more than 80 - it has had a fascinating history. This leaflet aims to point out some of the the major items of historical and architectural interest, and introduce you to the church of today.

Lemington Church and Village

The Royal Arms of George III, erected over the Chancel Arch in 1815, to commemorate the victory over Napoleon at Waterloo.

The Ten Commandments, Lord's Prayer, and Apostles Creed, behind the altar (see above), were added during the 18th century. At the same time the church was fitted with its box pews, and appropriate texts were added above the two Nave doorways, along with the Table of Kindred and Affinity, and the Charity Board, all splendid examples of the village sign-writer's skill.

The ancient parish of Lower Lemington lies in the north-east corner of the county, north-east of Moreton-in-Marsh. The boundaries of the parish were the Fosse Way on the west, the Knee brook on the north, a stream (possibly called the Leam) and the track from Lemington to the Four Shire Stone on the east, and a track from Dorn to the same stone on the south.

The church is dedicated to St. Leonard, a French monastic saint who died in 559, and whose feast day is 6th November. He is the patron saint of prisoners, and it was the custom for released prisoners to hang up their chains in churches bearing his dedication. Perhaps the pilgrim crosses on the Nave side of the Chancel Arch were cut upon such occasions.

The name first appears in the Domesday Book among the possessions of Tewkesbury Abbey.

"In Limentone 3 hides, 2 ploughs there. 8 villagers with 4 ploughs, 6 slaves and one smallholder. Value was 60s, now 40s."

At the Reformation it passed to the Crown, after which it descended through various owners until it was bought by Lord Redesdale in 1811, since when it has been part of the Batsford Estate.

Small though it is, the village has known its share of excitement. In the Civil War the church was badly damaged by a cannon ball, and a mass grave in the churchyard is thought to be a Civil War burial.

At the Restoration in 1660 the minister was attacked by his predecessor as he was leaving the pulpit, and forcibly ejected from the parsonage. His aggressor, John Smith, was described as "notoriously scandalous, being a swearer, a drunkard and a fighter" and lasted less than a year!

Just a few years later, in 1663, Dr. William Juxon, the Archbishop of Canterbury who had attended Charles 1 to the scaffold, and had become Lord of the Manor at Lemington in 1655, left £100 to the poor in the parish, as the Charity Board records. The charity lasted until well into the 21st century!

The church is Norman, dating back to the 12th century, and the chancel, nave and bellcote of that original building survive to this day. Over the years changes have been made to the windows (13th and 14th centuries), box pews and the pulpit were installed in the 18th century, and the north vestry added in 1880.

The church is divided into two by a small chancel arch, only 1.25 metres wide, and 1.75 high. The Royal Arms over the arch were erected in 1815 to commemorate Wellington's victory at Waterloo. The Decalogue is displayed on the east wall of the chancel. The whole building has no water or electricity, so is lit by candles for the services that still take place - usually three times a year.

The stained glass windows are all of the Victorian period or later, and recent alterations have seen the church re-roofed in 1909, the Royal Arms restored in 1985, and the Church Bell rehung in 1986.