



The Chapels Royal of St Peter ad Vincula and St John the Evangelist

HM Tower of London

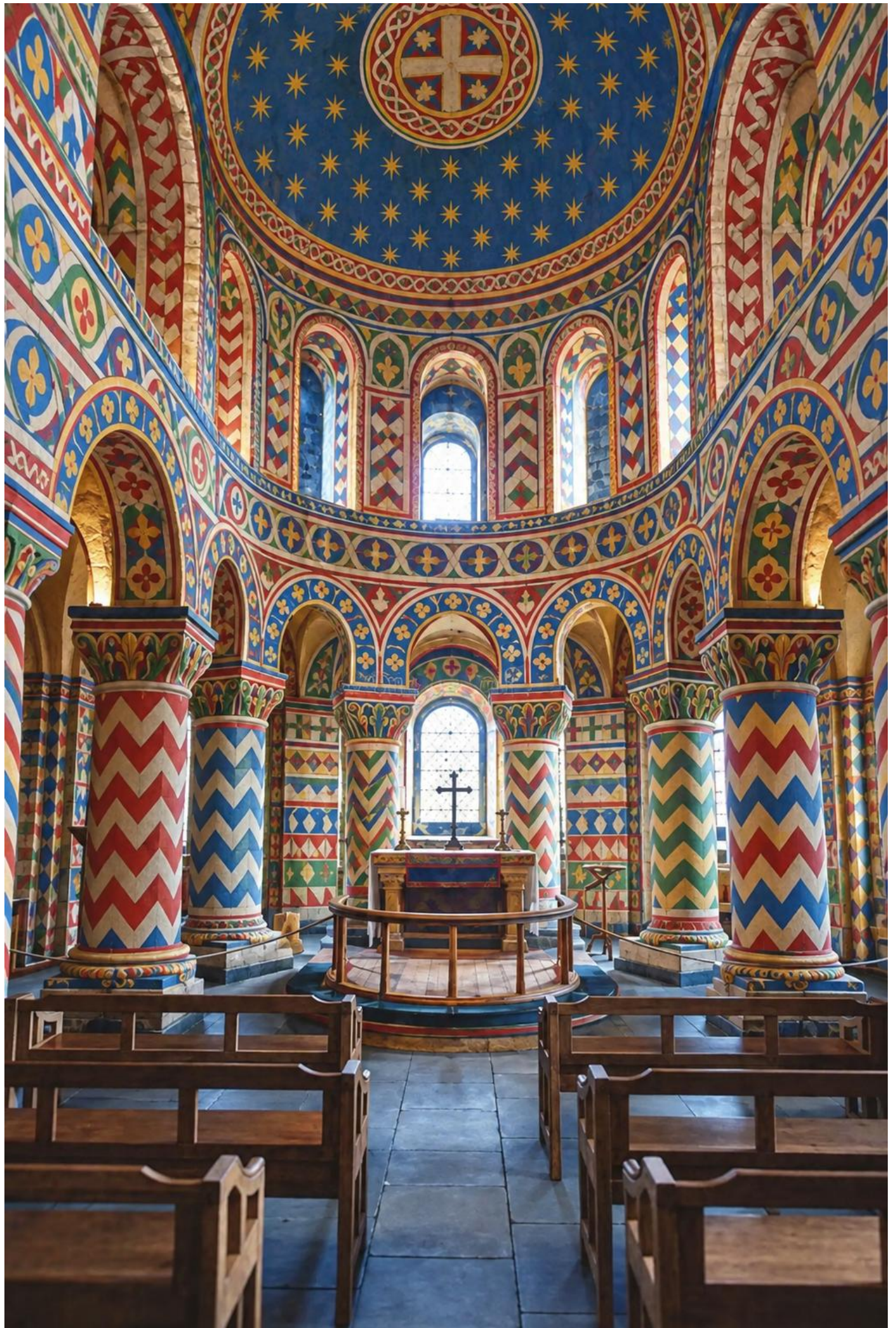
Dear friends,

I wonder how many of you are going to try to see the Bayeux Tapestry whilst it is on loan to the British Museum. It really is a fascinating piece of work. We could argue about the name, of course. Firstly, it is not a tapestry at all but a work of embroidery – images stitched on to a plain cloth, rather than woven into the fabric. Secondly, precisely because it is stitched not woven, and because English embroiderers were pre-eminent in the 11th and 12th centuries, some argue that it must have been created in England. Going further, some say that, as Canterbury was a particular centre of English embroidery and because Canterbury was such a significant town for the Normans as they strove to impose their rule on the English, it was probably created in Canterbury. If so, we should be calling it the Canterbury Embroidery not the Bayeux Tapestry, although I rather feel that the conventional name will stick.

The British Museum has produced a short but lively introduction, animating scenes from the original embroidery, which you can see [here](#). As that film suggests, whoever wrote the storyboard which the stitchers followed omitted some things, emphasised others and clearly followed a narrative which took the side of William the Conqueror. It pulls no punches when showing the horror of war; was this intended to remind the English that they had better behave if they didn't want the same to happen to them again? It is also surprisingly – how shall I put this? – earthy when it comes to illustrating human behaviour which seems to have little directly to do with the battle; so much so that the Victorians covered up certain details when publishing illustrated versions. One explanation for the inclusion of what Monty Python would have called these naughty bits, and the arguably unflattering way in which the Normans are depicted going about their warlike business, has led some to suggest that the English embroiderers were engaging in a little subversive commentary on their new rulers. Something that cannot fail to strike the observer however, even after the best part of a thousand years, is the vividness of the colours, although they must originally have been much brighter and more distinct. I was reminded of this when last in our own Norman Chapel of St John the Evangelist. Whilst the architecture remains authentically Norman (who could mistake those arches?), there is a total absence of colour, once you discount the much later stained-glass windows. Recent studies have made it clear that mediaeval churches were originally covered in vibrant pigments: reds, blues, ochres, greens and gold. Exterior sculptures were painted to resemble living figures, while interiors were layered with murals, patterned columns and richly coloured vaults. Scientific analysis has confirmed pigment residues on cathedrals across Europe. So, the next time that you are sitting in our Chapel of St John the Evangelist, close your eyes and imagine how it might just have looked when first finished. Thanks to AI, we can get some idea of how it might have appeared. See the next page.

All good wishes and blessings,

Cortland.



Service details for Sunday 27th September 2026
The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity

0930 Holy Communion,
Chapel of St John the Evangelist, White Tower

Readings

Ephesians 4:1-6 and Luke 14:1-11

Collect for The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity

LORD, we pray thee that thy grace may always prevent and follow us,
and make us continually to be given to all good works;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Poem of the week: September 1918, by Amy Lowell

Amy Lowell (1874–1925) was a leading American poet of the [Imagist](#) movement, known for her innovative verse and tireless promotion of modern poetry. The Lowells, together with the Cabot family, were leading members of the so-called Boston Brahmins who formed an intellectual, political, commercial and civic élite. From the late 19th century through the mid-20th century, they were often associated with a cultivated New England accent, Harvard University, Congregationalism and Unitarianism and, to a lesser extent, Episcopalianism (Anglicanism), as well as traditional British-American customs and clothing. The pre-eminence of these two families led one John Collins Bossidy to compose the famous *Boston Toast*:

And this is good old Boston,
The home of the bean and the cod,
Where the Lowells talk only to Cabots,
And the Cabots talk only to God.



Photo by Bettmann / Getty Images

Amy Lowell was, for her part, somewhat less conventional. “God made me a businesswoman,” she is reported to have quipped, “and I made myself a poet.” She was openly lesbian and had a lifelong relationship with actress Ada Dwyer Russell. She was known for her flamboyant personality, public smoking and defiance of social conventions, which contrasted with her élite New England background. She became a central figure in the American Imagist movement, promoting the work of Ezra Pound and other modernist poets. Lowell’s own poetry is characterised by clarity, precision and vivid imagery, all hallmarks of Imagism. She drew inspiration from classical

literature, Japanese and Chinese poetry, and the Romantic poet John Keats (see last week’s poem ‘*To Autumn*’), whose letters she collected and whose influence is evident in her work. Beyond her writing, Lowell was a passionate advocate for modern poetry, lecturing, translating and editing to bring contemporary trends to American readers. A year after her death, a collection of her poems posthumously won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry (1926).

Imagism favoured precision of imagery and clear, sharp language, all of which can, I think, be detected in her poem *September 1918*. At that time many young American men were fighting and dying in Europe as the First World War neared its conclusion. In simple language, Lowell sets the peaceful beauty of nature in the New England autumn with the war raging far from home. The first eight lines give no indication of what is coming; the ninth line introduces the subject of war in its last word. The poem pivots on that point, so that the final nine lines must be read against the reality of conflict and death.

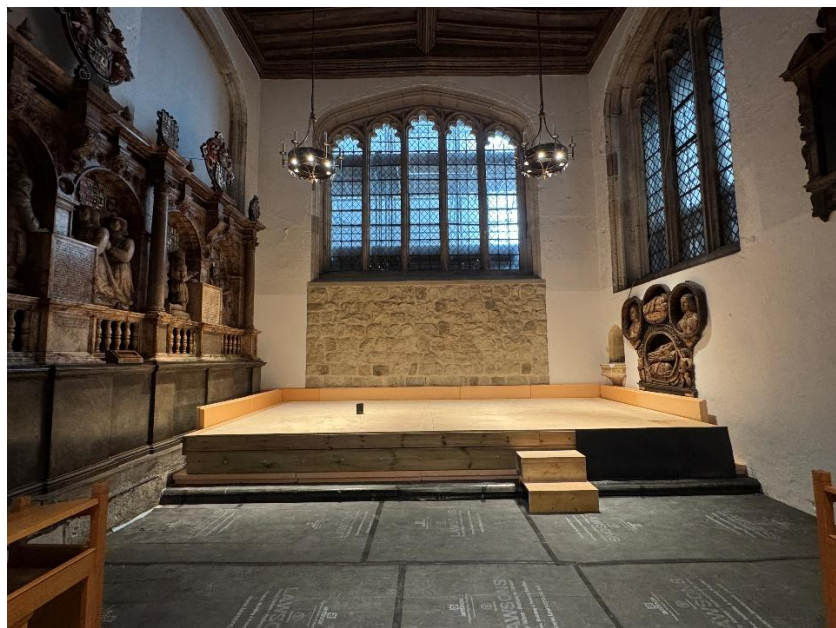
September 1918

This afternoon was the colour of water falling through sunlight;
The trees glittered with the tumbling of leaves;
The sidewalks shone like alleys of dropped maple leaves,
And the houses ran along them laughing out of square, open windows.
Under a tree in the park,
Two little boys, lying flat on their faces,
Were carefully gathering red berries
To put in a pasteboard box.
Some day there will be no war,
Then I shall take out this afternoon
And turn it in my fingers,
And remark the sweet taste of it upon my palate,
And note the crisp variety of its flights of leaves.
Today I can only gather it
And put it into my lunch-box,
For I have time for nothing
But the endeavour to balance myself
Upon a broken world.

Amy Lowell (1874 -1925)

Our Chapel.

This is what the Chapel of St Peter ad Vincula looks like at the moment, now complete with the temporary staging that had yet to be built in last week's picture. The altar has been moved, the choir stalls pushed back, and the space cleared to enable the safe re-installation of the East window. You will see why it is really not possible for us currently to hold services there, even though the Chapel remains open to visitors. We are scheduled to be back in there for our 1115 services from 18th October, if all goes according to plan.



Jigsaw

By way of a tribute to the poet Amy Lowell, this week's jigsaw is of the fall colours in New England. Believe it or not, those colours are absolutely authentic. The jigsaw can be found at:

<https://www.jigsawplanet.com/?rc=play&pid=3f70382cb7d1>



Prayers

Please continue to remember those on our sick list, some of whom are very ill, amongst whom we name: Louise, Rob, Kofi, Nick, John, Chris and Howard.

RIP

Leslie Stewart, Anna Haughton and Noah Woods.

Please continue to pray for peace in Ukraine and the countries of the Middle East:

God of peace and justice, we pray for the people of Ukraine and the Middle East today.

We pray for peace and the laying down of weapons.

We pray for all those who fear for tomorrow,
that your Spirit of comfort would draw near to them.

We pray for those with power over war or peace,
for wisdom, discernment, and compassion to guide their decisions.

Above all, we pray for all your precious children, at risk and in fear,
that you would hold and protect them.

This we pray in the name of Jesus, the Prince of peace. Amen.

With best wishes to all, Cortland.



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Our Safeguarding Officer

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Donations to the Chapel

We are always grateful for financial contributions to help us in our work. If you would like to support the Chapels Royal, HM Tower of London by setting up a Standing Order, making a one-off donation to Chapel Funds or setting up a Direct Debit, this is how to do it.

Thank you in advance for your generosity.

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The HM Tower of London Chapels Royal Foundation



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Standing Order

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Please remit to: CAF Bank plc	Sort code	40-52-40
	Account number	00027597
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The HM Tower of London Chapels Royal Foundation



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