

## How Interesting!

During 2011, Magna will publish notes about twelve notable and interesting graves and headstones, in and around Holy Cross Church and environs, written by Neil Richardson.

For September, we look at the short life of little Valerie Cody



On the afternoon of Sunday 17th September, 1989 I was sitting with my feet up, drinking a cup of tea. It was Holy Cross Sunday, and the late Rt. Rev. and Rt. Hon. Graham Leonard, then Bishop of London had in the morning been our special guest preacher and celebrant at the mass to mark our parish Feast of Title.

The phone rang. It was a woman speaking and she curtly informed me that there was a hole in my churchyard. I laughed, imagining this to be a prank call, but the caller insisted "No, I am not joking! It is dangerous. Go and see for yourself."

She was right. The grave of Valerie Cody was open and her tiny skeletal frame was clearly visible. The explanation is that poor Valerie, who died when aged only two, in 1944, had been buried in a brick-lined vault, probably awaiting other burials, none of which had taken place. The weight of the earth over the vaulting had finally taken its toll, and the top side of bricks had collapsed, leaving a large hole and a view of Valerie's mortal remains.

It was a sad sight, and we quickly had someone come to fill the vault with earth to ensure that this was the final resting place for this little girl and that it was safe for others to wander in the churchyard. Had she lived, in February 2011 she would have been 69 and probably a happy grandmother with a mind full of memories and that felicitous mixture of joy and sadness which we call life.

How sad.