

Small Pilgrim Places Journal 59:

All Hallows Parish Church, Bardsey, and St Mary Magdalene, East Keswick, near Leeds, Yorkshire

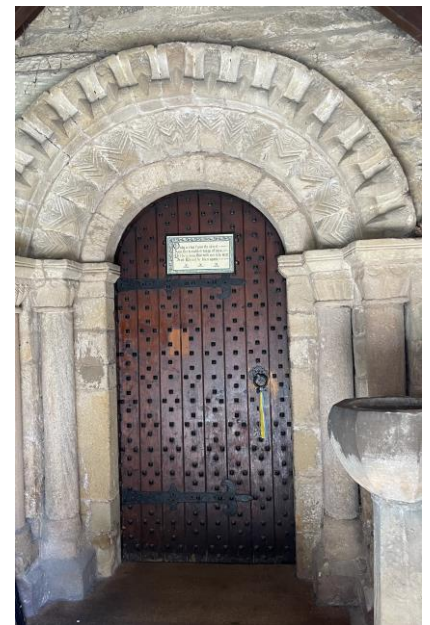
As I walked towards All Hallows Church, I was greeted by the sound of the bells ringing the hour - a timely welcome. I first explored the very large churchyard, accessed via an attractive timber lychgate. The grounds around the church, dotted with gravestones,



sweep down to the north, where a path is lined with benches overlooking a pleasant area trees and lawn, recently augmented by fruit trees. Beyond is a meadow and a strip of woodland beside Gill Beck. This delightful

spot is known as The Glade, a green space for people and wildlife managed by neighbourhood volunteers.

Returning through a gate on the upper edge of The Glade, I came to the south porch of All Hallows. The building, Grade 1 listed, is of varying-coloured sandstone, the local material in this western part of Yorkshire. A place of worship has stood on this site for over a thousand years. Originally consisting of a nave, porch and chancel, a tower was added in Norman times



which still stands. Entering the porch I noticed the chevron stone carving on the round-arched doorway. On the wall a certificate confirms All Hallows as a Silver Award Eco-church - not surprising, having seen the care taken to manage The Glade for nature conservation.



In the nave, Norman pillars run the length of the north and south aisles. Many changes were made over subsequent centuries, including widening the aisles and adding more windows and a chapel in the south aisle. A

three-niche sedilia and piscina were installed in the sanctuary in the 15th century and, in the 19th century, the height of the nave walls was increased to support a new roof, whose great beams are a striking feature. A leaflet on display helpfully gives details of all these changes, and I could make out the evidence of some of them in jumbled areas of stonework showing various cuts and grooves.

Amongst all the ancient features of interest I came across a rather more modern one: a millennium tapestry on display at the west end. Next to it is a neatly displayed selection of recycling containers for plastics, batteries and cartridges - more evidence of parishioners' commitment to stewardship of natural resources. At the back of the north aisle is a neat, unobtrusive refreshment area, and next to it a toilet, the walls lined with inscribed stone slabs, is neatly fitted where there was once a west door.



While I was looking around, hospitaller Terry and his wife Jean dropped by and Jean was soon serving cups of tea. We sat to enjoy our drinks - and Jean's homemade cake - in the south aisle where a corner is set aside as a quiet space with a prayer tree and a selection of books to borrow. Another area at the west end is furnished with children's tables and chairs, and plenty of toys and games. Jean told me that youngsters often come in through the week to play here.

Terry directed to my next port of call in the parish, St Mary Magdalene's Church in East Keswick, which has also been awarded the silver eco-church accolade. Despite its long history, the village had no church of its own until 1857, so this is a simple Victoria church in the gothic style, with some fascinating additions.



I was met in the nave by Liz, one of the hospitaller team, who told me how much she loved this role in greeting visitors and offering an inclusive, welcoming space for all comers. While Liz put the kettle on in a refreshment area between the nave and the vestry, I took a look at the stained glass. The east window's three lights, by the Powell brothers of Leeds, show stories associated with the patron saint. In the centre Jesus at the home of Mary and Martha, and the anointing of Jesus' feet and the Resurrection garden encounter to the left and right. A more modern window, in memory of a long-serving organist, shows choirboys outside with the church in the background. As with All Hallows, I noticed in the nave a craft table for youngsters and a display of books to borrow.



Liz took me through to an Edwardian addition to the original building, incorporating a well-maintained toilet in the undercroft, and above, a vestry. Here a stone mullion window looks out over a thriving millennium Yew in a large churchyard, where garden benches looks toward the hills beyond. She explained that parts of the sward had been sown, with the help of the local wildlife trust, with wildflower seeds, and some rare Yorkshire varieties of apple trees had been planted.

Passing back though the nave, Liz pointed out some of the exquisite little mice carved into the pew ends, the choir and priest stalls, Paschal candle stand and pulpit, all created by Mouseman furniture makers of Kilburn. A leaflet on display gives the history of the mice.

As well as information about the Small Pilgrim Places Network, other notices I came across, all neatly arranged, included one about a local food share scheme and another offering a helpline for anyone suffering from domestic abuse. These two churches, besides being well-cared-for, welcoming spaces to pause and reflect, are evidently putting into practice their God-given calling to care for their natural environment and for everyone in their community and those who come to visit.

