

## Small Pilgrim Places Journal 61:

### St Mary's Church Kettlewell, North Yorkshire

Set amidst the stunning landscapes of the Yorkshire Dales, Kettlewell is a picturesque village in Upper Wharfedale and a favoured destination for many fell walkers, cyclists, and hikers journeying on the 80 mile Dales Way that crosses the Pennines from Bowness to Ilkley. In fact the route runs right past St Mary's Church, which I found at the end of a short lane beyond a timber lychgate. This was given in 1921 by the couple who lived at nearby Scargill House, now home to a Christian community and centre for holidays, conferences and retreats.

My first impression on a June day was the stunning beauty of the large churchyard. Surrounded by mature trees, parts of it were mown and planted with flower borders and bushes, whilst further away from the church the grass sward had been allowed to transform into a gorgeous hay meadow supporting an array of wildflowers including orchids. A well-designed interpretation board gives information about the history of St Mary's, its graves and memorials, and also the vision for the churchyard as a haven for wildlife.



It also explains the inscribed oak signs dotted around, each giving a few words from renowned Christian teachers, and explains the presence of a labyrinth of stones and gravel amongst the trees and long grass. I noticed several people pausing to wander around this wonderful churchyard which, I saw from a sign in the porch, had won an award in 2021 for "North Yorkshire's Best Churchyard", a competition held by the Campaign to Protect Rural England.

St Mary's Church, consecrated in 1885, stands on the site of an original Norman, then a Georgian church, of which only

the tower survives today. All that remains from the Norman period is a simply carved, round stone font near the south door. The nave, well-lit from several large windows, is simply furnished with pews. Dominating the view towards the chancel is the East window, a memorial to a teenage Lieutenant killed in action in 1916. The risen Christ in the centre light looks down on two soldiers around a campfire, where a bundled uniform symbolises the young man lost to war.

The memorial theme is echoed in two other windows, each dedicated to sons of the Holdsworth family at Scargill, who died while serving in World War II. One shows John, who served in the Kings Royal Rifle Corps. I particularly liked the accompanying figure of St Francis feeding the birds, and St Hubert, a German saint said to have rescued a stag from the hounds, also pictured here. The allusion to care of creation in this window seemed to echo the care of the natural





environment surrounding this place of worship. The opposite window, with the figure of Michael in his flying gear, includes St Nicholas, patron saint of sailors: Michael served in the Fleet Air Arm.

Whilst I was admiring the windows I fell into conversation with Andrew, who was working at the church. We talked about the history of the building and its windows. I learned that the East window had originally been installed in a nearby mill before being transferred to the church. Andrew showed me the kitchen area neatly installed at the back of the nave, where a door leads to a toilet . As always it was good to talk to a local

person who has personal knowledge of a Small Pilgrim Place and its relationship with its surroundings and local community.

