

Small Pilgrim Places Journal 70:

St Paul's Church, Healey, near Ripon, Yorkshire

St Paul's Church in the small village of Healey is one of six Small Pilgrim Places in the county of Yorkshire, and the last one that I have visited. It stands on raised ground in the valley of the River Burn, a few miles from Ripon, between farmland to the east and high moorland to the west.

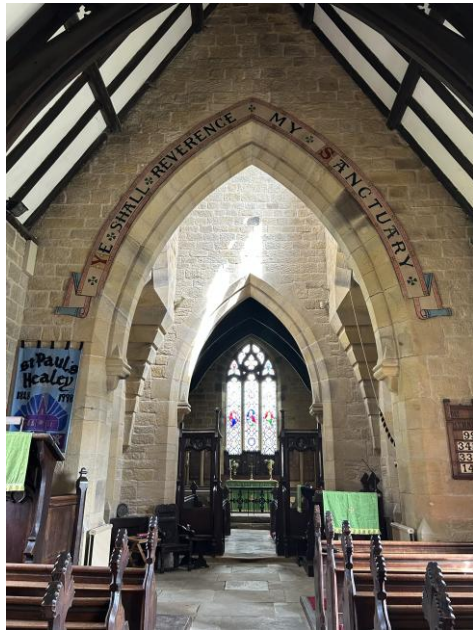
My first impression on seeing the church from the road was its similarity with Holy Trinity Melbecks about 26 miles away and its nearest SPPN neighbour. Both stand on higher ground that slopes up from the road; both were built in the 19th century; both offer far-reaching rural views from the south porch. Unlike Melbecks, however, St Pauls' Church has a spire rather than a bellcote. The building was designed by gothic revivalist architect Edward Buckton Lamb, for whom this was his first commission. He later designed five more churches in North Yorkshire as well as others elsewhere.



The stone used for building the church was sourced at a local quarry, and the timber for the furnishings, darkened by the Beefsteak fungus (which looks rather like a piece of rare steak, including its blood-red colouring), was taken from a nearby plantation. The windows all have pointed arches and tracery in the gothic style.

Stepping through the porch, I found a refreshment area in the west end and a small board for prayer requests. Turning to look towards the chancel, I was struck by the light flooding down

from the central crossing. This being a clear summer's day, it lit up the whole of the nave in an extraordinary fashion that took my breath away.



Looking directly up from the crossing point between the two gothic arches separating the nave and the chancel, I could see how the light came from two windows high in the square tower above the arches. Above this, hidden by a hexagonal ceiling, was the spire, whose weight was being held by the buttresses in the tower below. This was achieved without the sanctuary, altar and east end being obscured from view from the nave.

The three-light lancet window here includes the four evangelists—the eagle for St John, the ox for St Luke, lion for St Mark and winged man for St Matthew. Below these is a little medallion of the pelican with her chicks, a traditional symbol of Christ's sacrifice at the Eucharist.

A more recent addition

is a framed sketch map, beautifully drawn and coloured, showing the church in its local context, including the village, local becks and buildings, and the purple heather-covered Masham Moor.

I walked around to the rising ground to the north of the church, where beyond the tombstone the grass has been allowed to grow and from where I had a good view across the valley. I found a lovely, rough-hewn timber bench here, inscribed with the words, "Stop, breath, enjoy the view". Considering the wonderful rural setting of St Paul's, this seemed good advice indeed.

