

## Small Pilgrim Places Journal 19: St Raphael's Church Huccaby

The thirty-first destination on the Small Pilgrim Places Network was a little building that has the distinction of being the only Anglican chapel in England dedicated to St Raphael, the archangel whose name means "God's Healing" and (appropriately for pilgrims) the patron saint of travellers. For me it was also unique in being the only church I have visited that served both as a place of worship and as a school.



The church was originally built in the 1860s as a mission chapel, and stands beside a narrow lane off the road between Ashburton and Princetown on the vast, high moor of Dartmoor, Devon. Not far away the West Dart River winds through the valleys, offering small pools and beaches where families were gathering for a cooling splash in the clear water. Over the stream and up another steep hill is the hamlet of Hexworthy where the Forest Inn, about the same age as St Raphael's, offers refreshment and meals.



Above: The pews converted to children's desks during the week, and the large fireplace shows how the space was kept warm

The church building was designed not only for worship. It's the only church I've come across that was specifically built to convert to a schoolroom during the week. The pews – some of which are still in place – have backrests that incorporate ingenious mechanisms that allow them to be rotated to a horizontal plane, so as to form children's desks, complete with inkwells. There is also a large stone fireplace, with mantelpiece and hearth, which must have served both the schoolroom and the Sunday worshippers.

The interior is now arranged so that visitors can get a taste of how the school functioned – there are slate boards, chalks and quills on the desks - and also feel welcomed into a place of worship.

As with all Small Pilgrim Places it is open every day, and has a small adjacent area for car parking.

Ali Green

