

Small Pilgrim Places Journal 56: Holy Trinity Church, Dilton Marsh

To the south of Wiltshire's county town of Trowbridge lies Dilton Marsh, a couple of miles from the border with Somerset. The land here, mostly greensand and clay, is fairly flat and marshy, with stretches of woodland interspersed with rich farmland drained by ditches.

On the village High Street, among shops and houses, stands Holy Trinity Church, Grade II* listed, an eye-catching, ashlar stone building in the Romanesque style, in contrast to the mostly brick-built houses in the village. Completed in 1844, it features an apsidal east end and a short, squat tower. With its north and south transepts it forms an impressive sight that dominates the surrounding churchyard and streetscape.



As I walked up the path to the south porch, where the Romanesque style is repeated in the rounded arch with chevron decoration, I noticed the modern addition of attractive glass doors that let in the light without losing the warmth. I was welcomed by the vicar, Caroline and parishioner, Dianne, who showed me round the interior.

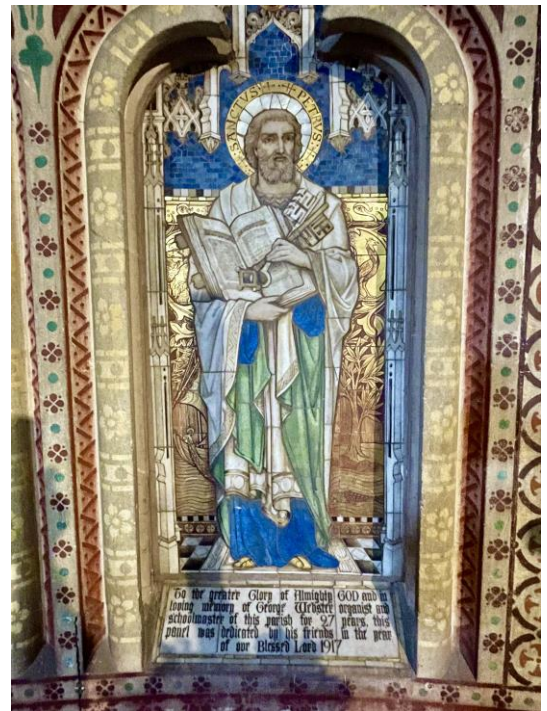
There are some lovely stained glass windows around the nave and transepts, many of them memorials. One of these, in memory of a love one who died in 1901, is taken from William Holman Hunt's much loved 'The Light of the World'. The artist painted three versions (the last one at about the time this stained glass copy was made) and it became one of the best-known works of its period, so was no doubt well-known to parishioners in Dilton Marsh when the window was installed.



Caroline and Dianne pointed out the quiet area in a corner of the north transept, where comfortable chairs are arranged around a modern icon of Mary and the infant Jesus, written by a local artist. Nearby is a noticeboard giving details of wildflowers recorded in the churchyard. Holy Trinity is an Eco-church, with the congregation aspiring to rise from a bronze to a gold award, so the churchyard is managed for nature conservation.

We moved to the chancel to admire the apsidal east wall, where overhead I could see the conical roof structure of bare timber beams radiating from the main tie-beam truss. Below, behind the altar, is a carved stone scene of the Crucifixion, flanked on each side by niches, each bearing a painted line drawing of an apostle. Two of these figures have been

filled in with rich mosaic, paint and gilt. Caroline explained that a previous rector had paid for these two images to be completed in this way, in the expectation that his successors would add more. So far only St Peter, holding his key and the scriptures, with a fishing boat and cockerel in the background, and St Matthew. with pen and gospel book in his right hand and money-bag in his left, stand completed.



We walked back down the nave, where a gallery is set against the west end. Underneath a servery, complete with cupboards, and a loo have been installed, a more recent addition that adds a sense of welcome for visitors and pilgrims.