

Days Out - with a religious connection.

Dormston, Kington, Inkberrow and Cookshill in Worcestershire.



Martin outside the south porch of St Nicholas, Dormston, Worcestershire.

I'm always saying this, but this was one of the most beautiful and surprising in our growing series exploring the amazing architecture, history and heritage of country churches within reach of Sedgley.

The visit was prompted by an enquiry about the **Homer family**, a prominent 'dynasty' of landowners in Sedgley, who once owned The Villa at 17, Dudley Street which they renamed '**Dormston House**' after the Manor the family inherited in Worcestershire. Pictures of St Nicholas' quirky half-timbered tower intrigued us so Magda and I resolved to see it for ourselves.

The day we chose was in late November 2016 – the season had quickly changed from the pleasant golden calm of autumn of recent weeks into the shivering, windy iciness of winter.



The distinctive tower at St Nicholas, Dormston.

St Nicholas is a 14th century medieval church with a timber-framed tower from the 15th century. It was restored 1899/1903. It's a Grade 1 Listed Building and features in Betjeman's Best British Churches (2011).



Magda wipes her boots on the boot scraper at the porch entrance to Nicholas, Dormston, before entering church.



The altar and south wall of the chancel. The East window above the altar has two lights but does not contain stained glass.



Tracery in the south window of the nave.



A Tudor chair with carved back by the altar.



Carved wooden benches at the back of the nave with simple shaped and moulded ends, probably 16th century.



A view of the nave and roof at St Nicholas, Dormston. It's a delightful small church. The seating is a mix of 16th century benches and chairs.

Our next church on this outing to Worcestershire was the 13th century sister church to Dormston – St James, Kington. Kington is separated from Dormston village by the A422 Worcester to Stratford road. The two are twinned as a parish.

There has been a Church at Kington for more than 700 years. There were three major periods of development, its origins lie in the early 13th century, followed by building alterations in the 15th and 16th centuries. Dr. Brighton's notes (Rector 1873-79) refer to a restoration in 1693, and the 19th century restoration included reconstruction but within the existing shape of the building.



St James' Church at Kington, Worcestershire, has a similar half-timbered bell tower to the one at St Nicholas', Dormston.



The kneelers at St James', Kington – the logo embroidered on them denotes the scallop shell of St James the fisherman – it was and still is used as an emblem by the pilgrims who visit Santiago de Compostella in Spain.



At the back of St James', Kington lies a 'muniments chest'. Two theories exist regarding its origin – either it was used for the faithful to deposit their alms for a crusade in the time of Henry II or King John; or it was a 'sure coffer' with two locks for the keeping of parish registers as specified in a 1538 mandate.



A beautiful window in the south wall of the nave: 'The desert shall rejoice and blossom' – a quotation from Isaiah 35:1.



The nave at St James', Kington.



A charming human touch on the choir stalls – a spectacle case for 'Bruce's Spare Glasses'!

Our third church on this exploration of Worcestershire country churches was **St Peter's, Inkberrow**. We arrived in the lane outside church just as a 1 o'clock wedding was finishing – the bride and groom were just about to leave for the reception. We met the vicar – a friendly American gentleman – just as he was about to join the party!



The lych gate at St Peter, Inkberrow.

Inkberrow is often thought to be the model for Ambridge, the setting of BBC Radio 4's long-running series *The Archers*. In particular, *The Bull*, the fictional Ambridge pub, is supposed to be based on the Old Bull in Inkberrow. **St Peter's Inkberrow** is thought to date from the 13th century, but there have been numerous additions and improvements and renovations every century since.



Martin at the impressive north porch entrance to St Peter's, Inkberrow.



The beautiful chancel at St Peter's, Inkberrow.



The effigy and tomb of John Savage, of Nobury & Egioke (b.1580 – d. 22nd December 1631) in the Dormston Chapel at St Peter's Inkberrow. He owned the manor of Egioke in Inkberrow. According to the inscription he had 'three wives, six sons and four daughters'.



in the Lady Chapel, there is a beautiful modern stained glass window, dedicated to Ron Gore of the Tythe Barn, depicting aspects of village life in Inkberrow.



The Old Bull at Inkberrow, said to be creator Gordon Baseley's inspiration for 'The Bull' pub at Ambridge in Radio 4's *The Archers*. However there is a rival claim from Rippingale that also has a 'Bull' Pub. The BBC frequently use Inkberrow for publicity shots for *The Archers*.



Martin relaxes in the 'Ambridge Bar' at Inkberrow.

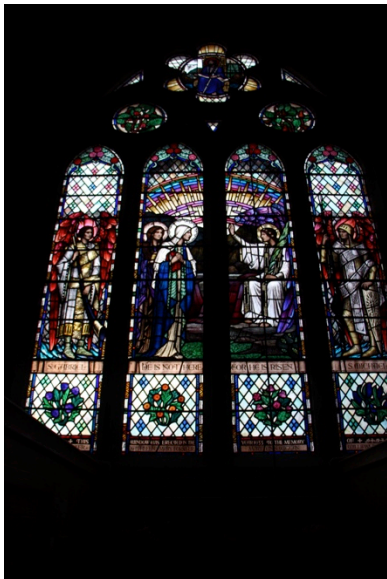
Our final church on this Worcestershire voyage of discovery was **St Paul's at Cookhill**. This was a more recent church than the others on our tour.



St Paul's Church, Cookhill is paired with St Peter, Inkberrow in the Inkberrow parish.

St Paul's was built in 1876 as a chapel of ease to Inkberrow. It remains in Inkberrow parish today. The architect was Frederick Preedy. It contains some fine Arts & Crafts stained glass by Sidney Meteyard of Birmingham.

In the early nineteenth century, the population of New End and Cookhill expanded rapidly as a result of the growth of the needle making industry at Astwood Bank. In March 1836, it was decided that a chapel of ease should be built in the Ridgeway area to enable this growing population to worship without having to walk the three or four miles to the church at Inkberrow. However, the project lapsed and the church was eventually built forty years later on a site given by the Marquess of Hertford.



A window at St Paul's, Cookhill.



The nave and chancel at St Paul's Cookhill.



The altar at St Paul's Cookhill.

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November 2016

Sources of information:

Dormston

<http://www.worcesteranddudleyhistoricchurches.org.uk/index.php?page=dormston>

<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/worcs/vol4/pp65-68>

Informations on cards in St Nicholas' church, Dormston.

Inkberrow

<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/worcs/vol3/pp418-430>

Cookhill

https://www.cofe-inkberrow.org.uk/st_paul.shtml