

LUDLOW & STOKESAY CHURCH

If you want a stress-free parking experience, avoid Ludlow town centre on a busy Saturday! Magda and I chose to arrive at noon for a weekend stay in early March and spent the best part of an hour driving round and round in frustration trying to find a parking space, first in the Coop/Library car parks, which are usually fine - then in the park by the Market.

However, once parked we spent an enjoyable afternoon wandering around the town. After lunch at Ye Old Bull Ring Tavern we went into Emporos, a favourite craft shop by the Feathers Hotel and then strolled through the wonderful Market.

We ended up in the beautiful church of St Laurence where Ludlow Town Choir were rehearsing before a concert in the evening. I had a chat with the churchwarden about their forward-thinking plans to remove their central pews and create a civic space where meetings and performances could take place.

After an overnight stay at the town's Travelodge we drove a few miles north on the A49 to Stokesay Castle, an English Heritage property.



The porch at St John the Baptist, Stokesay.

As it was a Sunday morning we expected there to be a service, but the church is part of a parish team group and they rotate their Sunday morning services around their team churches.



The Ten Commandments on the wall of the church.

The design of the church is similar to other country churches we have visited in Shropshire but there are some unusual features. Some of the most striking are the inscriptions of the Ten Commandments, the Nicene Creed and the Lord's Prayer all 'writ large' upon the walls.



The Lord's Prayer is also on the wall.

There are box/canopied pews that resemble Roman Catholic confession boxes which would have been used by the principal families in the parish.



Boxed, canopied pews for eminent families of the parish.



The panelled, canopied pulpit.

STOKESAY.

On Saturday, May, 9th 1959 in 2 hours
45 mins., was rung in this tower a Peal of
Doubles 5040 changes being 2 extents of Plain
Bob and 40 of Grandsire

Valerie Edge	1.	† Desmond Ferguson	4.
Leo. Evans	2.	o William Lloyd	5.
Harry Edge	3.	† John Meyrick	6.

Conducted by W'm Lloyd

In honour of the birth of a daughter Angela
Margaret, to the Rev'd and Mrs A.J.E. Neads of
Stokesay also to commemorate the Restoration of the
Tower and Re-hanging of the Bells.

Church Wardens:- R.C.Cornall & E.O.Philips.

The record of a bell-ringing feat in 1959.

At the rear of the church can be found the bell ropes and the record of an epic bell-ringing feat in the 1950s.

What makes it most beautiful is the church's location by Stokesay Castle. The church was built about 1150 as a chapel to the castle by the Say family who had come over with William the Conqueror.

The Stoke part of the place name means a dependent settlement or a dairy farm and implies a fenced-off area.

In 1646 a Royalist party with their horses took refuge in the church but were driven out by Parliamentarians who had captured the castle. Much of the church was destroyed in the battle but rebuilt in the Puritan era.



Martin at the well in the courtyard at the beautiful Stokesay Castle. with the gatehouse on the right, church in the middle and north tower and hall on the left.

On leaving the church we went round the castle which to me is one of the most charming we have ever visited. Free audio guides which interpret each part of the castle are available.

In the late 13th century the castle was occupied by a very wealthy wool merchant, Laurence of Ludlow, and he obtained consent from the king to fortify it in 1291. The wool of the Welsh Marches was of high quality and he dealt in large quantities of it. His descendants remained Lords of Stokesay for more than two centuries.



Magda by the south tower.



Carved figures border ornately designed squares on the overmantel in the Solar, where the family would have lived.



A view of the castle from the churchyard.

The castle and church make a charming visit and are highly recommended.

Martin and Magda Jones

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