

## **Trips Out with a Religious Connection**

**Lenten Journey - Malvern and surrounding area**

**Part 3 – Eldersfield, Pendock and Berrow**



**War memorial porch at St John the Baptist, Eldersfield, Diocese of Worcester.**

The next church we visited on our Lenten Journey, **Eldersfield**, was in fact as a result of us getting lost, trying to find our way to **Pendock**! Unfortunately, this splendid looking church was closed so all we could do was to admire its beautiful location and external architecture. As it was closed, we were unable to collect a church leaflet containing its history. However we have retained it in our travelogue to show how easy it is to get lost in rural parts and to mark it down as somewhere to revisit in the future.



St John the Baptist, Eldersfield; the beautiful location at Eldersfield featuring the village pond.



An unusual 'sun and moon' weather vane on the steeple at St John the Baptist, Eldersfield.

We eventually found our way to the church in **Pendock**, although this actually turned out to be a redundant church that has long since been abandoned due to the field enclosures of the 1800s and a cholera epidemic. It's recorded in the National Heritage List for England as a designated Grade I listed building, and is under the care of the Churches Conservation Trust. It stands in an isolated position overlooking and to the north of the M50 motorway. To its north are the earthworks of a former medieval village. The church dates from the 12th century. Alterations and additions were made to it in the 14th century, and again in the 15th century when the west tower was built. Alas our poor luck continued, as the church was not open when we visited and no leaflet was available.



One of the locals came up to say hello to Magda, in a field by Pendock Old Church.



**The solitary Pendock Old Church is in Sledge Green, in an isolated position, approached through a gate and across fields.**

There was however another church in Pendock - **Pendock Cross Church** also in the Diocese of Worcester. More bad luck - it was again closed! However it was a very attractive and unusual church. It resembled a Mission Church (rather like St Andrew's The Straits) - made entirely of wood. Also known as The Redeemer Church, it was built in 1899 as a temporary mission church, but is still in use. It has an outdoor font, which is stacked up on bricks. Again, alas, we had no opportunity to collect a leaflet.



**Pendock Cross Church. The font can be seen in the garden to the right of the porch.**

Our next port of call was altogether more successful. St Faith in Berrow was not only open, but extremely welcoming. When we arrived the churchwarden was himself undertaking the year's first mow of the churchyard. He very kindly told us about all the work that had been done to restore the church, with the assistance of the Heritage Lottery Fund.



St Faith, Berrow in late February – the churchwarden was busy mowing when we arrived, but still found time to welcome us!

The tower of St Faith's was probably built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It's unusual for being rectangular. **Faith or 'Foy'**, to whom the church is dedicated, was a young French girl from Aquitaine who died for her faith at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.



The porch and church tower at St Faith's, Berrow.



The Restoration Project at St Faith was completed thanks to the generosity of individual donors, the Church Commissioners and **Heritage Lottery Fund**, with a grant of almost £100,000 under the Listed Places of Worship Scheme. It needed urgent work for damp, improved lighting, adaptation for community use and some damaged areas needed repair.



The 14<sup>th</sup> century chancel at St Faith's Berrow, which has benefited from a sensitively executed restoration.

The church was probably built as a Chapel of Ease for workers from St Faith's Overbury, about 10 miles away.



**There is an effigy in the bell tower - and some mystery about whom it represents. It probably dates from around 1300. The head was removed in the Reformation when such imagery in churches was attacked.**



A stained glass window depicting St Faith, a 3<sup>rd</sup> century martyr. In the 9<sup>th</sup> century her relics were transferred to Conques, where the abbey church of St Foy was a popular stop for pilgrims on The Way of St James to Santiago de Compostela.

We were delighted to meet the **Rector of Berrow, Revd Julie James**, who had only just returned that morning from a holiday cruise. Despite being very tired, Julie spent time with us telling us about her parish and the recent restoration of the church. Julie is Rector of the united benefice of **Berrow with Eldersfield, Hollybush and Birtsmorton**.



A preaching cross in the churchyard at St Faith's, Berrow. In the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries wooden crosses were put up where priests or monks preached to the local community. These were later replaced by stone crosses.

That was the end of Day One of our Lenten Journey. On Day Two we visited Little Malvern Priory and Great Malvern Priory.

**Martin and Magda Jones**

**First Version**

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**Sources/references:**

Leaflets: 'A Trail of Mysteries' and 'Restoration Project' – St Faith Berrow

Other churches: Wikipedia entries.