

Far West of Cornwall, Tour 1.

St John in the Fields St Ives; St Senara Zennor; St Bridget Morvah; St Just Penworth.

Wednesday 27th July 2016

Our first outing to explore country churches in the far west of Cornwall began at **St John in the Fields Church** in the outskirts of St Ives, the sister church to the better-known church of St Ia (which is in St Ives town centre).

When we arrived we found a holiday 'stay and play' group for parents and children in full swing. The church had clearly 'taken the plunge' some time ago, removing its traditional pews to create a flexible multi-purpose area within the building.



St John's Church, St Ives – a holiday Stay and Play session was in progress when we visited in late July.



The beautiful organ pipes at St John in the Fields, St Ives.



Painted portraits of evangelists and saints in the choir area of St John in the Fields, St Ives.



Sculpture of St Francis of Assisi at St John in the Fields, St Ives.



Martin outside St John in the Fields, St Ives.

Our next stop was **St Senara's at Zennor**, with its mermaid bench. (We also stopped for a pasty lunch and took a walk to the coastal path!)



The approach to St Senara's at Zennor.



The Mermaid's Chair at St Senara's, Zennor.



Carved image of a mermaid on the end of the mermaid's chair.

In the Middle Ages, mermaids (part man, part fish) were used in Cornish churches to signify the dual nature of Christ - part man, part God. It also reminds us that St Senara came to Cornwall by sea and founded a church at Zennor over 1400 years ago.



Martin outside St Senara's church in Zennor – many Cornish churches have a 'coffin rest' at the lych gate, where coffins were placed by undertakers awaiting the start of funeral services.



The beautiful walk along the Cornish coastal path at Zennor.

Afer Zennor we drove on the the **Church of St Bridget at Morvah**. The church is dedicated to St Bridget, who was a Swedish saint. It is the only church in Britain so dedicated. The tower dates from the 14th century, although the rest of the church was rebuilt in 1828. Repairs were carried out in 1902, and the roof was restored again in 2011.



The altar at St Bridget's, Morvah. Note the Swedish flag in honour of St Bridget of Sweden - to the left of the altar.



Martin at the door of St Bridget's Morvah.

Our final stop on our first tour trail in the Far West was **St Just in Penwith Parish Church**. One of the highlights is its reredos made from Derbyshire alabaster, which is translucent and was backlit when we visited.

The identity of Saint Just is not known. Cornwall's long resistance to the edicts of Canterbury and Rome makes it most unlikely that the saint was Archbishop Justus of Canterbury, as some sources claim.



The outside of St Just Parish Church in Penwith.



The altar and reredos at St Just in Penwith. The reredos is made from alabaster.



A banner commemorating St Just.



The nave at St Just in Penwith – the roofs of many Cornish churches resembles the structure of an inverted boat.

Martin and Magda Jones

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10/8/16: First draft. Article to be updated with more detail.