

North West Shropshire

In the last week of August 2016, Magda and I chose a bright sunny day to explore the churches of north west Shropshire around **Oswestry and the Welsh borders** that we hadn't previously visited on our travels.

Our first church was the Grade I-listed parish church of **St Michael the Archangel at Llanblodwel**, which was heavily rebuilt in the mid-19th century to designs by its then-vicar, the **Revd John Parker**. The design has been referred to in the Pevsner Architectural Guides as 'bizarre', but 'unforgettable' - particularly the tower, which was apparently inspired by **Freiburg Minster** in south west Germany. The interior is even more unconventional, with many texts and stencilled patterns.



The distinctive tower, and spire with 'dominical curve' at Llanblodwel church in north west Shropshire.



Biblical texts and stencilled patterns in the nave, around the arches and on the ceiling at Llanbodwel.

The church was designed and rebuilt from a medieval church in stages between 1847 and 1853 by the vicar, Rev. John Parker (vicar 1845–60) mostly at his own expense. He designed the porches, ceilings, windows and reredos. The idiosyncratic, almost detached steeple was designed and added 1855-6 by the same vicar, who also designed and built the two nearby listed buildings comprising the schoolhouse and schoolmaster's house (at one time used as the post office).



Revd John Parker, who travelled widely throughout Europe - using the ideas he gained to design and upgrade Llanblodwel.



Gothic arches are embellished with ornate stencilled patterns and extracts from the Psalms. This is from Psalm 95, verse 6.



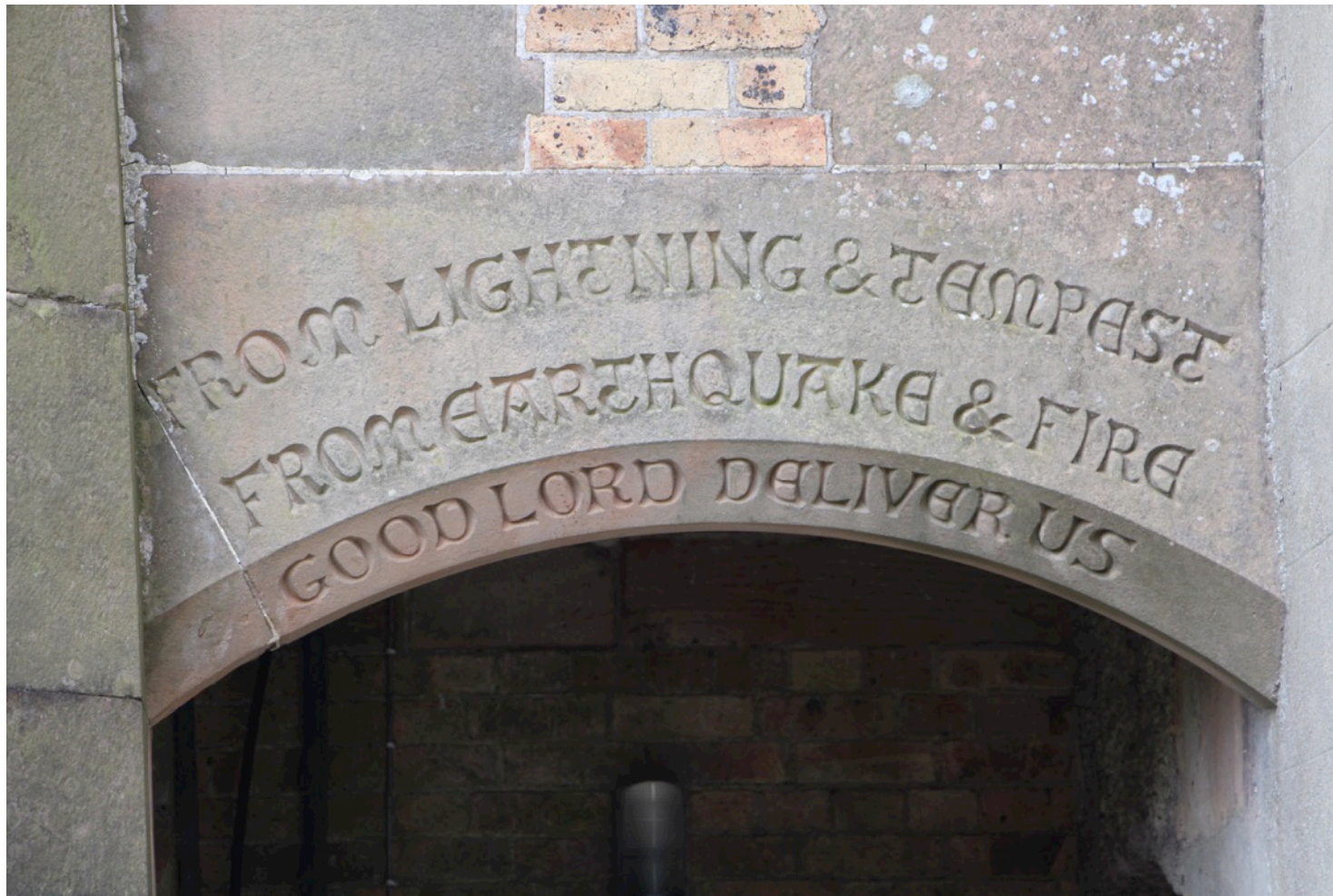
The ceiling, with sculptured ceiling bosses and decorative stenciling.



The East window, altar and reredos at Llanblodwel.



Magda with the beautiful pipe organ located in the gallery at Llanblodwel.



An inscription on the corridor connecting the tower and the church.



They must have heard I was coming - a very tall doorway at Llanblodwel! The door has an enigmatic inscription dated 1713.



Left: A great man remembered in the churchyard at Llanblodwel - Revd John Parker's memorial. It is inscribed: 'He departed from us at 61 years old, but his work remains.' Unfortunately much of his beautiful decoration was whitewashed out by later Victorians, only to be restored in the 1960s.

Right: The distinctive tower and spire.



Our next church was **St Mary the Virgin at Selattyn**.



St Mary the Virgin Selattyn.

The church, dedicated to St. Mary, stands in the middle of the village. It was first mentioned in Papal Tax records in 1291. The church is situated within an oval churchyard in which can be found a number of extremely old Yew trees. This points to the likelihood that Christian worship has been offered here for well over 1000 years. The bowl of the font dates from the 13th century and the beautiful barrel roof over the chancel is perhaps as old as the 14th century.

In the Middle Ages the church would have been a simple oblong, consisting of the nave and chancel, perhaps a tower. The internal nave roof timbers are from about the end of this period, namely the 15th century. The north and south transepts were not added until 1821–28. Then in 1891–92 the church was extensively rebuilt, with the addition of the north aisle and the red sandstone arches, while red roof tiles replaced slates. There are two Kempe windows in the church.



The barrel roof of the nave at Selattyn.



Another part of the roof at Selattyn.



The altar and East Window at St Mary's. The window is by Kempe. It is of the Crucifixion with the Mother of Jesus and St John at the foot of the Cross.



An old funeral bier that would have been used to transport coffins. Today it's an unusual table for church literature.



Parishioners at Selattyn have recorded their church's activities in photo albums covering the last few years.



An attractive aspect with lych gate, churchyard and St Mary's Selattyn in the distance.

Our next destination was **Dudleston** - once again the church is dedicated to **St Mary the Virgin**. It is an ancient church dating from Norman times with an older Saxon preaching cross in the churchyard. The building commands spectacular panoramic views over Wales, Shropshire and Cheshire.



The Saxon preaching cross in the churchyard at St Mary the Virgin, Dudleston.



St Mary the Virgin, Dudleston. Much of the church is 19th century – rebuilding and enlargements taking place in 1819 and 1877.



A 14th century log Parish Chest once used to keep parish records.



Wedding at St Mary's
Morrells of
(Plas Yolyn)

Black and white photographs in church show scenes from St Mary's past. This is a wedding around the time of the First War.



Family Tree
The Yew tree opposite the
entrance of St Mary's

A lovely old photo of a lady with her children hiding in the ancient yew tree at St Mary's.



The nave and chancel at St Mary's Dudleston. St Mary's is a beautifully kept church.

A LEGACY of £10 was left by a Servant Man and was charged upon the Owner or Owners of Sodylt Estate now in the occupation of Samuel Wynne, the Interest thereof to be distributed to the Poor at Christmas, by the Minister and Chapel Wardens.

1729.

Also the like Legacy of £10 was left by another Servant Man to the Poor of Dudliston, and is charged upon an Estate at Pentrecoed now in the possession of M^r. William Dickin, the Interest of which is to be distributed to

A Table of Benefactors and Queen Ann's Bounty thereby obtained to the Minister of this Chapel.

1664. M ^r . Phil ^l . Jennings of Sodylt	L 10	Brought over	L 255.16
1705. M ^r . Edw ^d . Roberts. Dudleston	6	M ^r . Tho ^s . Longford of Pentrecoed	2
M ^r . John Hughes of Pentrecoed	7	Joseph Cartwright	1
A Serv ^t . of M ^r . Tho ^s . Longford's	10	William Cartwright	1
1716. Edw ^d . Jennings of Dudleston Hall Esq ^r	100	John Powel	1
M ^r . Fran ^l . Edwards of Keelhendre	100	The Rev ^d . M ^r . Sherratt	10
1719. M ^r . Jo ^s . Longford of Wiggington	5	M ^r . Roger Jennings of Sodylt	5
M ^r . Edw ^d . Edwards of Pentreheylin	4	John Longford.	1
M ^r . George Mathews	11.6	M ^r . Rich ^d . Kyffin of Coedyralt	3
M ^r . Edw ^d . Prichard of Croslane	5	M ^r . Edw ^d . Morrall of Plafsvollen	10
M ^r . Jo ^s . Jones of Teeny Kennel	5	1730. Alice Newnes left	5
M ^r . Tho ^s . Hughes of Pentrecoed	2	Queen Ann's Bounty	200
	255.16		£ 404.16

Benefactions towards obtaining a Second Bounty.

1726. Edw^d.

A Table of the Poor

A Servant fr
A Servant fr
Somebody fro
Jennings Fam
M^r. Roberts of
M^r. Roger Jenn
M^r. John Jones

In the entrance porchway there are records of donations made to the church over the years.

SUNDAY SERVICE 9.30.A.M.

Welcome.

Rev. S.C.AIREY. Tel. 01691 690212.

A puerile afternote! – we hope the 'scary' vicar of St Mary's Dudleston doesn't deter visitors.

Alas our final church visit on this trip to north east Shropshire proved unsuccessful. As you will have gathered, it's often a **game of chance** to find churches that are open during the week. On our way back we called into **Welsh Frankton** which appears in the book of Shropshire Churches – yet alas it was closed. We did however have a look round the churchyard and outside of the building.



St Andrew's, Welsh Frankton.

Welsh Frankton is a small settlement occupying a position at the top of the 'Brow' - a high hill forming the southernmost edge of the hills that stretch away to the north west and Wales.

The village is dominated by **St Andrew's Church**, built in 1858 by public subscription. It is unusual by the size and position of the steeple which starts from a massive base and tapers away rapidly. It is also positioned on the side rather than the end of the church. The walls are heavily buttressed and the vestry was enlarged in 1898.

The remainder of the village comprises a few cottages, a shop and a village service station. The village hall provides youth facilities and Frankton maintains a flourishing cricket club.



The beautiful carved wooden sign on the driveway to church, erected to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the church.



A view from the entrance porch of St Andrew's Welsh Frankton, to the north west and Wales.

Martin and Magda Jones

August 2016