

**Trips out with a religious connection-  
exploring the churches of the Diocese of Worcester**

**Lower Sapey, Harpley and Clifton-upon-Teme, Worcestershire**



The remote, redundant old church of St Bartholomew, Lower Sapey.

Over the May/June half term in 2017 Magda and I set off in search of a Grade II\* redundant church in Lower Sapey, Worcestershire, south west of Stourport and north west of Worcester. In so doing we encountered two other active churches with great charm in the same area. However the trip was not without mishap. Having reached Lower Sapey we could find no signs or indications to where the old church was, and managed to end up at the wrong place, in nearby Harpley! However this mistake in itself revealed a hidden history.



**The new St Bartholomew's church, in nearby Harpley.**



It turns out that in the 19th Century the population at the centre of the parish had dwindled so much that a new church (also called St Bartholomew's) was built up in the hamlet of Harpley, and this is where regular services are held.



The altar at the 'new' St Bartholomew's, Harpley.



The font cover at 'new' St Bartholomew's, Harpley.



A beautiful bush in flower in the churchyard at Harpley.



Having driven back and forth, we reluctantly abandoned our search for the old church, and made for Clifton-upon-Teme. Then, quite by accident, we saw a brown tourism sign to the Old Church, Lower Sapey. We turned down a very long, winding and hilly lane (fittingly right at the end of 'Hope Lane'!), until eventually our determination was rewarded.



**The Old Church, Lower Sapey, partially hidden from sight by a high hedge.**

The church is in a cul de sac, surrounded by wonderful chocolate-box buildings.



**A half timbered building by the church in Lower Sapey.**





**Other buildings neighbouring the church in Lower Sapey.**

The church dates from the early part of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It was abandoned in 1877 when the new St Batholomew's was built in Harpley and used thereafter as a farm building and for storage. Since 1990, repairs and restoration have been carried out.



**A large wooden cross stands at the east end, where the altar would have been.**





Despite not being in active use, the church is clearly looked after on a daily basis, with fresh flowers placed on the windowsills.



Graffiti on the walls of the church appears to be quite old - with some dates (possibly faked?), from the 1920s and 30s.





The gallery at the west end of the Old Church, St Bartholomew's, Lower Sapey, restored by the Friends of Old St Bartholomew's.

Since 1994 the church has been in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust and its conservation has been aided by a local trust, the Friends of Old St Bartholomew's.



**Windows at old St Bartholomew's, Lower Sapey.**



In Clifton-upon-Teme we found a third church of interest on our trip – St Kenelm’s. A sandstone church, mainly 13th century, the south aisle was added in the 14th century: it was restored in the mid 19th century by Harvey Eginton (1843) and James Cranston (1851-53).



St Kenelm's, Clifton-upon-Teme.



St Kenelm's, Clifton-upon-Teme has an interesting '2 plus 1' lych gate arrangement. Beside it, set into the wall, is a stone marking the coronation of King George VI in 1937.





**A funeral bier in the porch at St Kenelm's.**



The nave, viewed from the choir at St Kenelm's, Clifton-upon-Teme.





**In the Woodmanton Chapel, the effigy is of Sir Ralf Wysham, Steward of the King's Household and Justice of North Wales, who died in 1332. He lived at Woodmanton Manor, close to Clifton-upon-Teme.**



An interesting tombstone set into the floor of the nave at St Kenelm's – commemorating Elizabeth Taylor, Gentlewoman, who died in 1670.





The full frontage of St Kenelm's, Clifton-upon-Teme.

The three churches we visited show the immense variety of buildings and architectural styles that can be explored in the country churches of our Diocese. They offer an intriguing insight into the changing economies and shifts of population in the communities they serve.

## **Martin and Magda Jones**

**Churches visited 31<sup>st</sup> May 2017**

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### **Source information:**

Old St Bartholomew's Church leaflet

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old\\_St\\_Bartholomew%27s\\_Church,\\_Lower\\_Sapey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_St_Bartholomew%27s_Church,_Lower_Sapey)

[http://www.wwrt.org.uk/?page\\_id=914](http://www.wwrt.org.uk/?page_id=914)