

Wednesday, 24th April 'Three Churches and there's Nobody In(n)' with Paul and Penny Kurowski

A group of 11 OVA walkers and our walk leader Penny Kurowski met on a dry but chilly spring morning at Christow Car Park to commence a varied and interesting walk to take in two stages of the Eden Way which visits 6 village churches in the Teign Valley.

A short stroll from the car park brought us to the 1st medieval church, St James' Christow whose origins go back to the 13th century, with the present building dating largely from the 15th century. Its oldest surviving artefact is the large, square Norman font and the beautiful rood screen retains its medieval colouring.



The carved pew ends were reminiscent of those in East Budleigh church but also included low level doors to the pews. As we left the church Penny pointed out a grave by the church door for Nicholas Burell who died at that spot in 1631 and was buried there along with Walt Burell who died in 1632.



We followed country lanes full of wildflowers away from Christow past a thatched cottage 'The Hill' described as one of the oldest cottages in the Teign Valley, but what caught my eye was the building adjacent to the cottage constructed of what looked like recycled materials including perhaps an old stocks!



Continuing into Lower Ashton we crossed Spara Bridge over the river Teign a packhorse bridge built in 1660 complete with triangular cutwaters for pedestrian refuges.



As we left Lower Ashton along the valley surrounded by steep hills, we spotted meadows with a selection of sculptures set out in them, but this wasn't one of the 'surprises' that the walk promised.

Arriving at St John the Baptist Church in Ashton we did not envy brides who must walk up the steep uneven steps to the church. Time for a coffee break in the wildflower-filled churchyard complete with early purple orchids before visiting the beautiful church.



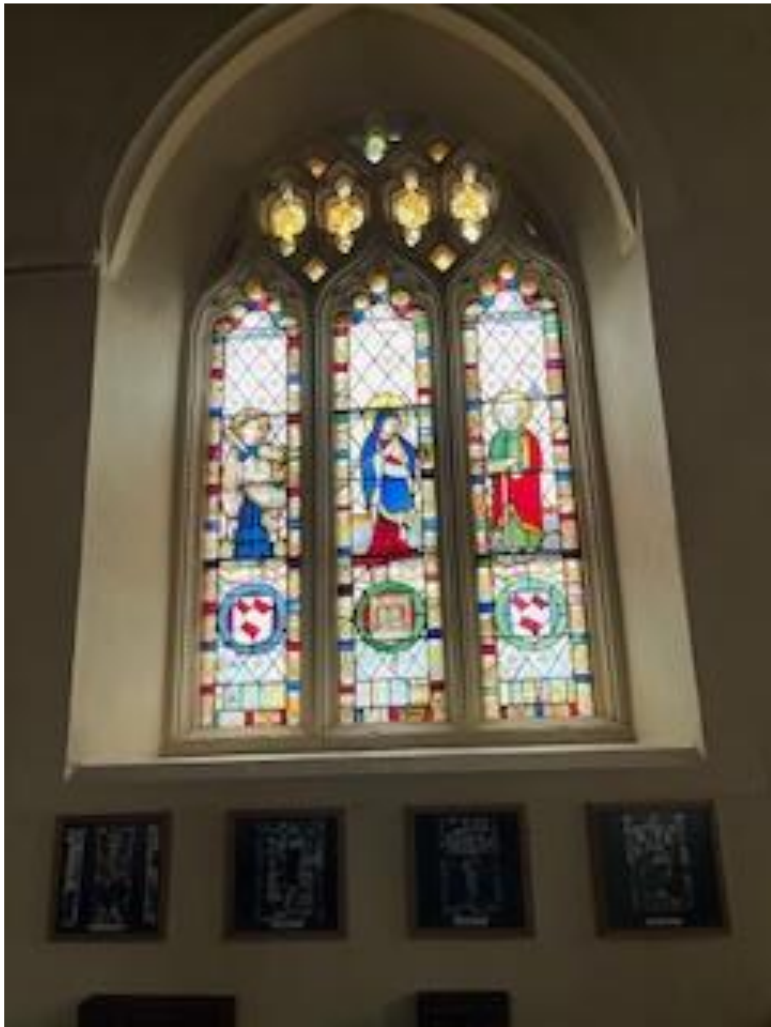
Inside the church we were impressed by the rood and parclose screens with their medieval paintings of saints and other images in remarkably good condition for their age. For the keen-eyed the medieval stained glass includes windows spelling out the Latin acronym INRI which stands for *Iēsūs Nazarēnus, Rēx Iūdaeōrum* and translates to Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.





The walk continued on footpaths beside meadows and through woods full of wild garlic and by fields scattered with more early purple orchids to reach a quiet lane along the side of another picturesque valley before arriving in Doddiscombsleigh. Some of the group visited the famous 'Nobody Inn' while others continued to the peaceful church yard of St Michael's church to eat our picnics with more good views across the deep valley.

A leisurely lunch in the sun was followed by a visit to the interior of the church which boasts some of the oldest medieval stained glass in Devon outside of Exeter Cathedral.



From Doddiscombsleigh our return route took us through fields and meadows towards Christow. Enjoying the sunshine and accompanying horses we had forgotten that we had also been promised some 'surprises' on this walk – that is until we turned the corner on the small lane, we were following to be confronted by what looked like a yard full of torpedoes.



Our eyes did not deceive us because we had come upon Trinity Marine yard, workshops and showrooms. It claims to be 'The World's Largest Traders of Marine Antiques' and their friendly staff were happy to welcome us in for a brief visit and walk around. A treasure trove for any marine enthusiasts.



From the marine yard it was only a short walk along Sheldon Lane to our next 'surprise' - a railway yard containing old buildings, a well-worn train and memorabilia from E & TVR.



The Exeter & Teign Valley Railway line is no longer operational, but perhaps with a very vivid imagination and a lot of money could perhaps be the alternative route to avoid the Dawlish stretch of railway between Exeter & Newton Abbot.



A steady climb along the lane back to Christow and a deep-sided footpath took us back to the church where we had started our ramble to find chickens grazing in the churchyard!



Many thanks to Penny (& Paul) for planning and leading a very interesting and scenic walk.

Jane Kewley