



NEWSLETTER

Annual Meeting and Talk

15 November 2023

at Wells Museum 6.30 for 7.30

Cathedral Green, BA5 2UE

William Newsom brings us:

“Somerset Churches: More than just mighty towers* - a celebration of Somerset church towers, spires and bellcotes in all their wide variety.”

We will start the evening with a short Annual Meeting at 6.45 and then break for a glass of wine before William Newsom entertains us with more of his exceptional research.

Details on the website: www.somersetchurchestrust.org

October Crawl: Cameley, Paulton & Timsbury.

Tony Davies hosted a crawl in North East Somerset attended by, shall we say, a small select group!

This area, especially around Radstock and Midsomer Norton, has a largely industrial heritage. But the area contains some fine examples of church architecture, and on this trip planned to visit three of those. Two of the churches date back to the 12th / 13th centuries, whilst the third is Georgian; but all three have Grade I or Grade II* listing and have some fine features.

The three churches are in very different settings. Cameley is an almost abandoned village, in rural isolation on the side of a hill. Paulton is a busy industrial village. Timsbury stands high on the hillside overlooking the valley of the Cam Brook. Sadly, Paulton came under the heading "the best laid plans...", as it was locked when we arrived, so onwards to Timsbury!

St James, Cameley

Was absolutely fascinating. St James was made redundant in 1976 and is the care of the Churches Conservation Trust. It stands on the side of a hill overlooking a fishing lake and the Cam valley, and is almost on its own since the villagers left for nearby Temple Cloud.



The 15th red sandstone tower dominates the setting. It contrasts with the rather unprepossessing Mendip blue lias limestone church. *Pevsner* notes 'the outside gives little hint of the uncommonly unrestored interior.'

Inside you will find both mediaeval benches and Georgian pews; two galleries (one of which is reached up a flight of stairs next to the porch and was 'Erected for the free Use of the Inhabitants' in 1819); a two-decker C17th pulpit with canopy, and a square Norman font. (And an unusual shaped memorial.)



There is a lot of dark wood around the church. But the highlight is the collection of fabulous wall paintings from the 12th to the 17th centuries, and Charles I Royal Arms. *Pevsner* clearly liked this church - it is well worth a visit.

St Mary, Timsbury (BA2 0EJ).

This is a much more modern church, built in 1826-32 when the old church had fallen into disrepair, with a new chancel designed by Sir Gilbert Scott added in 1852, including a 'splendidly coloured East Window'. It is a light and airy church, very Victorian in most of its features. But it still has an ancient font near the door, and inside the tower a perfect Mass dial. Note the lively gargoyles on the chancel parapet, and the fine old sanctuary lamp.



The East end of the church is built in three bays, but the seating in the nave has just one aisle. Again there is a gallery at the west end of the church, with a royal coat of arms decorating the gallery wall.



The walls are adorned with a host of elaborate plaques, many of them to members of the Samborne family. And, hidden behind the organ along with the vestments, tables, chairs and other typical church 'stuff', the tomb of Barnaby Samborne.

AS EVER, DETAILS ON THE WEBSITE

www.somersetchurchestrust.org

*** Towers!**

William is playing his cards close to his chest for his talk so, taking advantage of editorial prerogative (and space to fill!), here is a picture of a 16th Century tower! The face of the tower was used for playing 'fives' (no doubt much to the irritation of Churchwardens). And, where is this fine church? According to *Pevsner* 'perhaps the best Norman parish church in Somerset' - it is St Michael's Compton Martin, which your editor can see from his study window!



(See:

www.stmichaelscomptonmartin.co.uk)