

# A Lenten Journey

Exploring the Diocese of Worcester during Lent 2017.

3: Defford



The church of St James, Defford.



Revd Canon Susan Renshaw showed Martin and Magda round St James, Defford. All the churches visited on this trip are in a north-south line to the west of Bredon Hill, parallel to the M5. Parsons' Folly can just be seen at the top of Bredon Hill. Rev R H Lloyd says the folly was built around 1714 as a summer house for Williams Parsons of Kemerton.

The next church **Revd Canon Susan Renshaw** took Magda and me to see lies north of Eckington and is also adjacent to Bredon Hill.

**Defford** features in historical records going back to 972, when it was called Deopanforda, a reference to the deep ford at the entrance to the village where there is now a bridge over Bow Brook. In 1065 lands at Defford were transferred to help endow Westminster Abbey at its foundation by King Edward the Confessor.

Defford continued to be served by the monks of Pershore until 1535, and thereafter by the clergy at St Andrew's in Pershore. In 1865 it joined with **Besford** to become an independent parish under the patronage of Westminster Abbey. There has been a close link with the Abbey ever since.



The keystone to the door at St James, Defford, carries the carved head of a queen of a type seen in the west portal of the cathedral at Chartres in Northern France and in the west portal at Rochester Cathedral in Kent. The style places it in the 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> century.





The nave and chancel at St James, Defford. The nave appears to be medieval - it has a moulded tie-beam roof (just visible in this shot).



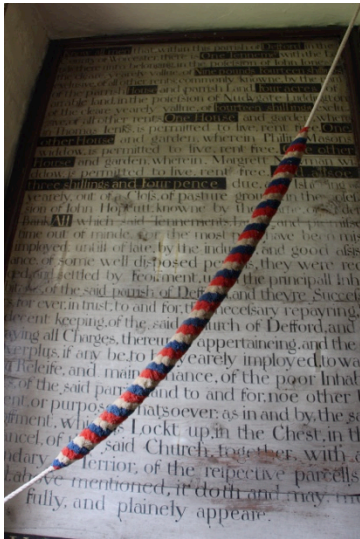
**Magda chats to Revd Canon Susan Renshaw about the church - the west gallery is a Georgian addition and would have been used by musicians. In earlier centuries the organ was not the standard instrument of the Anglican church – small bands of musicians played from galleries such as this one.**



A church banner at St James Defford depicts the emblems of the patron saints of 'Defford cum Besford', St James's scallop shell and St Peter's keys of heaven.

Defford is dedicated to St James. Followers of **Revd Canon Stephen Buckley's** recent pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela in Spain, where St James is reputed to be buried, will recall the association between St James and the scallop shell. Pilgrims often carried a staff with a scallop shell as a sign of their faith.





The vestry in the church tower contains 'alms boards', listing bequests of land and money to assist the poor, hanging on the wall.



The steps to the church tower. Defford also has a three-lock parish chest, with what appears to be the initials of past churchwardens.



Susan Renshaw and Magda in the choir gallery at the west end. The medieval tie-beam which is part of the structure of the roof can be seen more clearly in this shot (right). Much of the wall area has been covered in plaster over the years.



The windows in the south wall appear to be medieval.





**A beautiful model of St James, Defford is on view in a south window.**



The sanctuary at St James, Defford. The window depicts St James and St Peter with Jesus.



Photos of past vicars of Defford; also a photo record of the decoration of the tower by local community volunteers in 1984.





The upper part of the tower at St James, Defford, is timber-framed, renewed in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century but replacing an earlier timber tower. Some repairs to the guttering pending!



**Revd Canon Susan Renshaw outside St James, Defford.**

## **Martin and Magda Jones**

**First written March 2017.**

**Sources:**

St James, Defford – a short guide to the church (leaflet in church).