

Hughley, Easthope and Shipton

Our visit was inspired by A.E. Housman's poem 'A Shropshire Lad' was spent exploring the churches of Wenlock Team Ministry.

Actually, as far as I'm aware, only one church, Hughley, is mentioned by Housman, but it served as a good starting point for discovering the churches in the surrounding area.

Within the Team Ministry there are two discrete geographical groupings, one cluster lying north on the road from Wenlock to Shrewsbury, and the other on the road leading south west from Wenlock in the direction of Craven Arms and Church Stretton.



St John the Baptist, Hughley



The vane on Hughley 'steeple' - in fact it's a half timbered bell tower.

Our first church, Hughley, lies north of the Stretton Road (B4371). Its main claim to fame is the mention in A.E. Housman's poem 'A Shropshire Lad' (see below). It's likely that Housman merely picked the name off a map, because it's said that when he wrote the poem he had never actually visited Shropshire, being in fact born in Worcestershire. Indeed, there is no steeple there, and never has been at Hughley, although there is a half-timbered bell tower, albeit with a vane:

The Vane on Hughley steeple, Veers bright, a far-known sign, And there lie Hughley people, And there lie friends of mine...



Rood screen at Hughley



A colourful post-Easter altar cloth at Hughley.



Mary and Rabboni stained glass at Hughley

Inside, the church is distinguished by an attractive carved rood screen dividing chancel and nave. The post-Easter altar cloth was beautifully vibrant and there are a number of colourful stained glass windows around the church. Especially poignant at the time we visited was a window depicting a passage from John: 20 in which after the Resurrection, Mary mistakes Jesus for the gardener and asks him what has become of Jesus's body. Eventually she realises it is the Lord, and addresses him as 'Rabboni', ie teacher.



The driveway approach to St Peter's, Easthope.



Martin at the bell tower, St Peter's, Easthope.

Our next church lies in Easthope, a small village between the B4371 and B4378. It's very similar in design to Hughley, having an almost identical half-timbered bell tower. The approach to the church is impressive, up a long, sweeping driveway with sheep grazing in the adjoining field.

The church has 12th century origins and is dedicated to St Peter. It was largely rebuilt after a fire in 1928.



The wrought iron hourglass holder and glass by the pulpit, dated 1662.



Lectern, pulpit and hourglass at Easthope.



Rood screen, Easthope.



The 'porthole' in the porchway at Easthope frames an idyllic rural churchyard in winter (although it ought to have been spring!)

Echoing Hughley church, at St Peter's there's an even more impressive carved wooden rood screen separating chancel and nave. One priceless gem by the pulpit is a wrought iron hourglass holder and glass, with the initials 'S.S.' and the date 1662 (there was a vicar called Samuel Stedman at that time) . The hourglass was rescued from the 1928 fire along with the sanctuary ring on the door. Within the porch wall there's a delightful porthole, framing the idyllic pastoral landscape around the church.



High roadside walls of snow on the B4378 with Brown Clee Hill in the distance

Our third and last church on the outing was St James' Parish Church in Shipton which is a little further south on the B4378. En route in the distance the familiar outline of Brown Clee is visible - on this day the entire landscape was covered in snow – snow ploughs having cleared it from the road and blown it into high walls to the side.



Martin at St James', Shipton, where four children who sailed on the Mayflower in 1620 were baptised.



The main entrance to St James, Shipton

The appearance of St James is very similar to that of Hughley and Easthope, again having a half-timbered bell tower. Inside there are memorials to some of the prominent local landowners whose wealth sustained the church over the centuries: the Lutwyches, Myttons and Mores.

In Memory Of
ELINOR MORE baptised 24th May 1612 died 1621
JASPER MORE baptised 8th August 1613 died 1620
RICHARD MORE baptised 13th November 1614 died 1695
MARY MORE baptised 16th April 1616 died 1620



These children, born at Larden Hall, Shipton, were
baptised in this Church, and sailed on the
Mayflower to New England in 1620

Presented by the MASSACHUSETTS SOCIETY
OF MAYFLOWER DESCENDANTS
1996

Mayflower memorial plaque, St James', Shipton, presented by the Massachusetts Society of Mayflower descendants.



A memorial on the church wall at St James', Shipton to Mary Mitton, who died in 1640 - she was the wife of local landowner Henry Mitton.

In 1996 a tablet was erected commemorating four children of the More family who were dispatched by their 'father' to America on The Mayflower in 1620.

The father disowned the children, claiming that his wife had had a longstanding affair with another local man. He, in effect, kidnapped the children, and having connections in high places, arranged for these awkward reminders of the alleged illicit union to be spirited away to the New World.

Three of the children died soon after arrival in America, while the fourth, [Richard More](#) survived to become a sea captain and lived to a ripe old age.

Martin and Magda Jones
April 2013

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