

Robert Mountford

Ecumenical Officer for Birmingham, the Black Country and Staffordshire

"On Saturday 19 August, we will walk from Hulton Abbey (Abbey Hulton) to Bagnall St Chad's and Tomkin Chapel, then on to Longsdon St Chad's, Leek St Edward's and Dieulacres Abbey ruins. I estimate that we would pass through Bagnall during the mid-morning "

On a lovely summer's day, a wonderful eleven-mile pilgrimage walk from Hulton Abbey, Stoke-on-Trent, to Dieulacres Abbey, Leek, in the footsteps of the Cistercian monks who prayed, worshipped and worked in North Staffordshire for 330 years...



Robert and team on their walk.

Passing through Bagnall and visiting St Chad's as planned they were greeted by members of our congregation.

As can be seen, it was a beautiful day, perfect for their walk.



Oatcakes and Orange Juice

Saturday 29th July marked the day of Leek Show and whilst I was very keen to attend, Pete was less than enthusiastic! Sadly therefore, I decided to give it a miss since I would have struggled on the field on my own. A change of plan was called for and a guaranteed way of putting a smile on Pete's face is to suggest an oatcake! First stop therefore was Leek Oatcake Shop! I must say, they were very good and after a couple of cheese and bacon oatcakes, good humour was restored and we came up with a plan!



We decided to have a run up to Buxton as we both love the drive over there: the Roaches, the moorland and the sheep! However, instead of going into Buxton itself, we decided to carry on towards Castleton.

First stop was Mam Tor with magnificent views over the Hope Valley, with Castleton nestling in the distance. Mam Tor is owned and managed by the National Trust and is very popular with walkers—it was lovely to see so many young people and families out and about... there was also a healthy number of dogs enjoying their outing! Of course, a big draw for visitors is the sight of the damage caused by the famous landslide - no wonder it is a site of geographical interest.



“ The Sheffield Turnpike Company first constructed the A625 Manchester to Sheffield road in 1819 using spoil from the nearby Odin mine (National Trust, 2009) and the road crosses the main body of the landslide twice as it winds its way up the slope. The following 160 years saw constant repairs and reconstruction. In 1977, the landslide moved again and the road was restricted to single-lane traffic (Cripps and Hird, 1992). In 1979, the road was permanently closed to traffic and what remains today is an interesting example of landslide movement and repeated road reconstruction and repair. ”



After our visit to Mam Tor, or “Mother Hill” (so named because of the frequent landslips creating smaller “mini hills” beneath it), we drove towards Castleton through Winnat's Pass—this is SUCH a breathtaking drive!

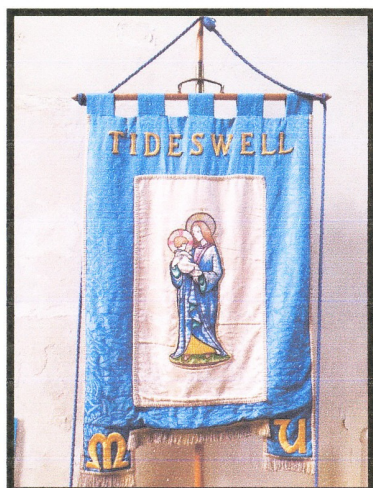
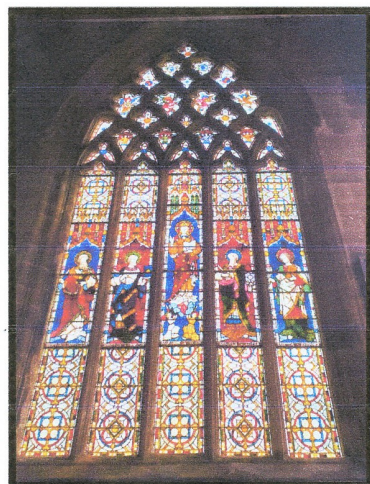
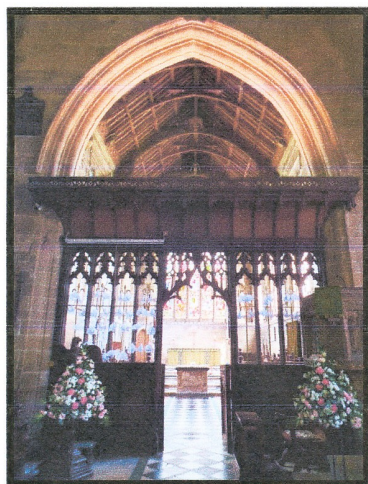
Castleton itself, and the road leading to it, was of course, HEAVENING!!! Not a car parking space to be had anywhere! However, undeterred, we turned this disappointment into an opportunity to visit somewhere else that we'd NEVER been to.

A few months ago, my brother drove over this way with Mum and they visited Tideswell Cathedral. This prompted me to put the location on my “to do” list! Well... the opportunity lay before me as we headed into the village, just a few miles out of Castleton (and on the way back towards Buxton, so we weren't going out of our way). As we drove through the village, it was apparent that a wedding was taking place so we parked outside a very attractive pub which immediately caught our eye - the George Inn— with its lovely hanging baskets outside. Whilst the wedding was finishing up therefore, we quenched our thirst in the very cosy “George”... this is where the “orange juice” element comes in as I only allow myself fresh orange juice at the weekends now—I have always loved it but it is SO CALORIFIC!

After the welcome refreshment, we headed right next door to the “Cathedral”. The church of St John the Baptist has come to be known as “The Cathedral of the Peaks” or “Tideswell Cathedral”, earning this title in view of its impressive size and grandeur. It certainly is a striking place of worship.



“Tideswell’s superb 14th-century church is so large and grand that it is popularly known as the Cathedral of the Peak. The first record of a church comes from the late 12th century, but the present church is entirely a product of the years 1320-1400. The relatively short building span means that the church is a remarkably complete example of Gothic style.”



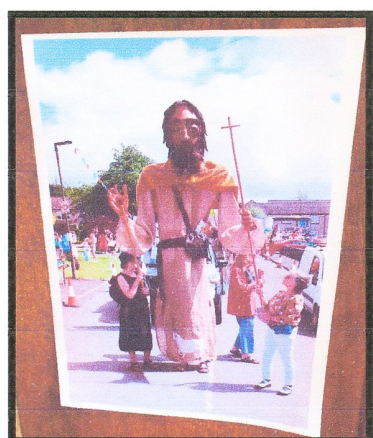
Look who we found whilst we were there—the Tideswell Giant! He makes Pete look like he has shrunk in the hot wash!

Created this year, the 12ft giant represents John the Baptist and he was paraded around the village in June during “Wakes Week”, a traditional, celebratory week, said to date back over 750 years!

Below you will see the picture of John the Baptist (or as he has now become known, JTB!) in the procession and also the write up about the rationale behind his creation.



Just to finish on “another” floral note! If anyone knows the name of these flowers that were growing outside the church, please let me know! The bees loved them—you may be able to see the three bees in the photo if you look closely!



Tideswell’s Giant

Inspired by medieval iconography of St John the Baptist, a 3.5 metre (12ft) high giant took to the streets for the first time during Tideswell’s carnival on 24th June, his birthday!

Designed and created by Fiona Rogers of Red Pepper Artwork the project was developed by Gerard Rogers and Simon White, who had been talking for several years about making a Tideswell processional giant. The Covid pandemic delayed the project.

With helpers from the village, drawn from Tideswell Players, the church and the community, the giant was constructed where possible from natural, repurposed or recycled materials. The head and hands, built up from papier-mâché on a cardboard base, were sculpted and painted by Fiona. The hair and beard were made from raw wool fleece from a Jacob sheep, needle-felting over many hours by the dedicated team of helpers. The body was constructed from a basic wooden frame attached to a 75 litre rucksack. The costume was made from hessian by Gerard Rogers.

St John the Baptist is usually represented accompanied by a sheep*. For this giant a beautiful fabric sheep, designed by Fiona and inspired by the sheep on church embroidery, was stitched by Sonia Rigg and appliqued near the base of John’s gown.

JTB, as he has become known, processed around the village at the head of Tideswell’s Carnival procession at the end of the village Wakes Week. Carried by Gerard, with additional support from Simon, his hands and arms were articulated by Fiona Rogers and Beth Lawrence.

Thank you to all who assisted in this project for the community and church, including St John’s for funds and those who helped make the giant or who donated cardboard and other materials including High Peak Signs (for the massive cardboard tube essential for John’s neck).

JTB joins the thriving European - and also international - community of processional giants, one of 26 created around the world in the month of June. He will shortly be on display in St John the Baptist Church, Tideswell, the Cathedral of the Peak where Simon, who retires this year, is the joint vicar.

While this giant will be seen again at other local events, future processional giant projects could include notable historic Tideswell figures, including martyr Nicholas Garlick (1555 to 1588) whose head is said to be buried in Tideswell Churchyard, William Newson (1750 to 1830) the Minstrel of the Peak and singer Samuel Slack (1757 to 1822). They are sure to make a big impression.

You can see images of JTB at various stages of construction and in the procession online on the Facebook page called The Tideswell Giant – St John the Baptist (photography by Daisy Rogers, Gerard Rogers, Fiona Rogers and Simon White).

Team: Peter Robinson, Janice Robinson, Margaret Filer, Nicola McNally, Sonia Rigg, Simon White, Fiona Rogers, Gerard Rogers, Sharon Ball, Aoife C. Eagle.

* John pointed jessus out to others with the words, “Behold, the Lamb of God!”



Esther x

