

YORK

MINSTER

REVISITED

During February we had a few days in York, which is where we were both students. We spent much of our time catching up with friends and family but we did find time for the odd treat - like a visit to Betty's Tea Rooms. We also popped into the Minster for a look round.

The Minster was not my regular church in York - that was an Anglican-Methodist LEP nearer campus, where the congregation was a mix of students and local residents. The university chaplains were on the ministry team and at least one of my history lecturers turned up from time to time as a Methodist Local Preacher. I did however attend the occasional Sunday morning service in the Minster and, about once a term, Choral Evensong too. Far more memorable were the student services I attended there. There were two regular fixtures in the calendar - both ecumenical and shared with students from across the denominations, led by our Anglican, Methodist and Roman Catholic chaplains.

The first was Ascension Day, early in the morning we would climb up the Minster Tower to be rewarded (on a good day!) with views across the city and beyond and a short service which was followed by breakfast at the nearby College of York St John. The second was a service for All Saints Day which was held in the Minster Crypt after dark - it was a chance to spend time in a quiet, candlelit Minster before coming together for Communion.

With these memories it is always nice to revisit the Minster and see what is happening. Our visit coincided with the unveiling of the newly restored East Window and there are good interactive screens which allow you to see the details in each section of the window and learn about their meaning. There's an excellent new exhibition looking at the archaeology of the area and the way the Minster has evolved. The Stonemason's Yard is now more visible to the public so you get a closer look at the amazing carving being done.

A further exhibition was housed in the upper part of the Crypt. Entitled 'Tourist, Traveller, Pilgrim?' It explores what it means to be a pilgrim today and particularly focuses on the Camino de Santiago in Spain and on the Pilgrimage of Prayer, Witness and Blessing that the Archbishop of York, John Sentamu, made round the Diocese of York in 2015/16. The Crypt is a good location for this exhibition as it contains the tomb of St William and has been a place of pilgrimage. Every visitor to the exhibition can take a 'Pilgrim Passport' home with questions to reflect on such as 'what journeys have changed you?' and 'have you ever discovered something extraordinary in ordinary, day to day life?'

I've never been entirely at ease with the way the Minster makes visitors leave via the gift shop but it was a chance to browse through the books and I came home with my Lent book for this year.

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