

A Life Cairn and Other Matters

Big Ted

On a nice sunny day at the end of September I went for a walk to Flawford church with a lot of very friendly people and three lively dogs. The walk was arranged by Uncle Paul as one of his Fellowship Activities. Well, I say **I went for a walk** but I was actually carried there in a small rucksack (and I only fell out once but fortunately I didn't hurt myself - I sort of bounced).

We all met up at church where there was a pile of clean stones on the table in the Children's Corner. We each picked one up and carried it with us on our walk.

We walked through the village, crossed the road (very carefully 'cos it's busy) and went into a field. We trekked through that field into another field, and then into yet another field where Uncle Paul told us about an old wooden windmill that used to be there. It was used to make flour for Plumtree and was burned down by some very bad people (of the 'Sunday morning lounge variety' according to Uncle Les and an old newspaper) in 1914.

Then we went on to a bridle path called Mill Lane ('cos it used to go to the mill I s'pose) and walked along there for AGES. Uncle Paul showed us a patch of wild horseradish (I wasn't altogether sure what that was, but Auntie Fiona says it's a spicy root often served with roast beef - I don't think I'd like that at all!). We stopped for a rest, to look at the view of Tollerton and to have a biscuit and a drink.

Uncle Paul told us about some of the stones that were used to make the path. They were slag from an ironworks and were bluey grey with bubbles in. I couldn't see any, but the others found some so they picked them up (Uncle Tony dug some out of the path!) and carried them on our journey.

Finally we arrived at Flawford church, but it wasn't there! Uncle Paul explained that it was taken down in the 1770s because it was too far from the villages it served. All the stones had been used to build other things. You could see a line of gravel in the grass where the church walls had been.

After another drink, we put together our Life Cairn. As we placed each stone on the top of the pile, Uncle Paul asked us to think about things or people that meant a lot to us. (I was really very naughty and thought about CAKE!)

When we had put our stones on, and Sophie had finished eating the apples from the tree she found, we walked all the way back to Plumtree (it was even further coming back).



Back at the church we were really hungry and we found that Auntie Pauline and Auntie Kate had made cottage pie and pudding for us, which was really tasty; thank you so much.

But, a really big thank you goes to Uncle Paul for taking us on the walk and for finding out all the interesting things to tell us.

Later on, I went away on holiday again. This time it was to a county called Oxfordshire. I stayed in an old cottage in a village called Hook Norton. The cottage was really nice and had a hot thing called a Rayburn which meant I was nice and warm but it was a bit noisy sometimes and disturbed some of my snoozes.

There were also some rude words bandied about when the hot water didn't work and the tea tasted funny.

Anyway, I had a lovely time. I visited 13 more St Mary's churches; I'll tell you a bit about some of them:

In Ilmington I found 7 carved mice (there were s'posed to be 11 mice but I think the rest were hiding). They're there 'cos the man who made the pews and things was called "The Mouseman". [*Robert Thompson of Kilburn, North Yorkshire, created much of the woodwork in the church in the 1930s, Big Ted*].

Then I met some very nice ladies in the church in Banbury; they said "Hello", admired my T-shirt (I was wearing my green one, with my smart khaki shorts), and they pinned my visiting card on the board for all the children to see.

At St Mary's in Bloxham I had to sit on an odd grating to have my photo taken beside the sign - and SOMEONE [*whoops, sorry, Big Ted*] let me fall off and bang my head! What a big church it is. I met the vicar here and the ringing man [*he's called the Tower Captain, Big Ted*] they were both really friendly. Then I met two teddy bears and sat with them for a chat, but one kept falling over which was a bit silly.

Away from St Mary's churches, I had a look at the nearby canal. This is a different bit of canal from last time [*it's the Oxford Canal instead of the Grand Union Canal, Big Ted*] and it is much narrower. I saw a man driving a boat into a lock and he bashed it on the side, it was very funny.

I also visited Hook Norton brewery (snigger) but I wasn't allowed inside which was a shame 'cos it looked really exciting and I could have got into all sorts of trouble! It's a funny shaped old building on lots of floors and they have big horses to pull a cart with the beer barrels on.

I think I'll have a rest from visiting St Mary's churches for a bit; besides which there's Christmas to look forward to (mince pies and Christmas cake, yummy!).

A Happy Christmas to all my wonderful fans.

Love, **Big Ted xx**

*PS I've now visited a total of 66 St Mary's churches. You can read all about them in my book (it's called **Big Ted's Book**) which lives with me in the Children's Corner. Little Ted keeps an eye on it when I'm away doing my Roving Ambassador thing. They're also on my pages on the church website: www.plumtree.church.*

PPS When I came back from my holiday I found that Uncle Bill and Auntie Greta had left me a lovely woolly cardigan to keep me warm in the winter. Their daughter knitted it 'specially for me. Thank you very much.

