

ST ANDREW'S CHURCH FELMINGHAM



Church Guide and History

FELMINGHAM

Felmingham appears in the Domesday Book of 1086 as “Felmicham” and Felmincham”, meaning the “homestead of Feolma’s or Feolomaer’s people”. The land is recorded as held by King William 1, Roger Bogot and the Abbot of St Benet’s at Holme.

The earliest recorded artefacts found in the parish are Mesolithic in date and evidence of Neolithic and Bronze Age settlement have also been found.

Roman artefacts have been found throughout the parish, including part of a mould for casting broaches of a type worn by the followers of Boudica and is one of only three of its type found in the whole of the Roman Empire. This suggests that Roman metalworking may have taken place in this parish. There is also evidence that a Roman temple may have existed along with a Roman settlement.

Objects from the Early and late Saxon period have been discovered during building work at the church.

The Church

The original church was probably built in 13th century, with the first recorded Rector (John Sampson) taking up Office in 1267. Wills dating from 1485 to 1546 record that money was left “for the building and finishing of the steeple”. The fact that the tower, although massive, has an unfinished look, suggests that the original intention to build an upper part may not have been carried out with the onset of the Reformation.

The nave was originally much longer and higher, with north and side aisles. The north aisle contained a chapel dedicated to St John the Baptist and the south aisle chapel was dedicated to St Mary. This contained an image of our Lady of Pity

However, in 1742 a fire destroyed much of the building, except the tower. It was rebuilt in red brick but using the original windows and south door and it re-opened in 1754. The footprint of the original aisles and the height of the roof can still be made out.

With the help of a generous bequest from Judith Bartram of Ruggs Farm who died in 1990, an extension on the north side enabled the provision of a toilet and kitchen and extensive renovation and refurbishment inside the tower. This work was carried out between 1988 and 2000.

The Tower

The pairs of angle buttresses at each corner rising to the top of the belfry opening would suggest that some embellishment was originally planned to be supported at the top.

Around the base as well as around the West Door and in the buttresses, is a frieze of flushwork panels , which is quite rare.

The West Door has spandrels each containing carved tracery including a shield in a quatrefoil. The one on the South side has the saltire cross of St Andrew. Either side of the doorway are three tall flushwork panels of inset flints, with cinquefoil heads, and above the, six short panels with trefoil heads. One of these panels has been pierced and glazed to give light to the tower stairs.

The Tower (inside)

The tower arch has a glass and wood-framed screen completed in 2000 with carvings by Gerald Adams of Long Stratton.

The carvings at the base of the screen were designed for the enjoyment of children, including a snail, a mouse, a bee and acorns. Look also for scenes from nursery rhymes: the cat and the fiddle, the cow jumping over the moon and the dish running away with the spoon as well as a spider and its web, a harvest mouse, an owl, a squirrel, a boy playing with a ball and a girl on a swing. Above these, you can see depictions from the life of St

Andrew. On the left we see the boy offering the loaves and fishes to Andrew for Jesus to use in the Feeding of the Five Thousand. On the right is Andrew with his fishing boat. Above the doors is the vine to remind us of Jesus: "I am the vine and you are the branches...." and symbols to depict the bread and wine of the Eucharist, such as grapes and wheat. At the very top are scenes depicting the four seasons and the countryside, such as the tractor, that surrounds the church as well as the association with Judith Bartram who came from a farming family.

A certificate in the Bartram Room commemorates this award-winning design and those responsible.

The west window is Perpendicular in style, dating from 15th century.

The Nave

This was completely rebuilt in red brick after the fire of 1742, using the windows from the original church. The middle two are fine examples of reticulated tracery of the Decorated Style. The other windows have sexfoil circles, created by inserting extra small lobes to the quatrefoils.

The font bowl is made of Purbeck stone and dates from 13th century. It rests on a 14th century stem with two pointed arches on each face. The font cover is Victorian.

The pews and lectern are Victorian as too is the Pulpit. However, some of the wood for the pulpit may have

come from the Medieval Rood Screen of the original church. Note the carvings in some of the spandrels on the pulpit – flower and leaves in two panels and dragons, hawks (or eagles) a griffin and a woodwose (or wild man of the woods) in the other two.

The organ was built in 1999 by Norwich Organs and funded by the Bartram bequest. It replaced an instrument of 1860, which is now in Tuttington church. Some modern stained glass panels have been inserted in the windows – a roundel of a Sower given in memory of Alan Elden (1906-1908) on the north side and, on the south side, a panel depicting St Mary and the child Jesus plus two roundels is dedicated to Elizabeth Soden of Colby (1892-1974) and was installed in 1975.

The Chancel and Sanctuary

As a result of the 18th century rebuild, there is no separation between nave and chancel apart from the small change in floor height.

The most easterly window on the north side contains stained glass that survived from the fire and depicts the coat of arms of John Baron Seagrave, who died in 1353 and his wife Margaret.

The glass in the East Window came from St Philip's church in Norwich in 1975, having been made in 1943, and depicts Christ prior to his Ascension.

On the south side of the sanctuary there is a panel of the Risen Lord greeting Mary Magdalene.

The Altar (or Communion Table) dates from the early Stuart period (c.1600). The 15th cent Parish Chest sits on a later stand.

The Boards depicting the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer survived the fire. The processional cross has, in the centre, a picture of the victorious lamb – a symbol of Christ's victory over sin and death. Also depicted are the symbols of the patron saints of the churches in the Felmingham Group of five churches that existed prior to 1992.

The carved head of Christ on the north-east wall came from Oberammergau where the Passion Play is performed every ten years.

Monuments, etc.

On the wall near the south door are surviving pieces of brass which presumably survive from within the original church. One is dated 1680. Another is to Ursula Wychekynggam (d.1530) and on the reverse her chaplain, William Elyes (d.1500). Another is to Robert Moone (d.1591) and on the reverse is the centre part of a priest in Mass vestments (c.1450). William Wytwood, who died in 1628, is remembered on the largest piece.

On the north side of the nave opposite the south door there is a tablet *“sacred to the memory of Robert Moore, Gent. Inhabitant of this Parish 54 years who died 29th March 1813 aged 82 years. Also Mary, his wife, who died 29th January 1819 aged 70 years.*

On the north side of the chancel, a tablet *“sacred to the memory of John Seaman, Gent. For many years a much respected inhabitant of this Parish whose remains are deposited in the family vault near this place who departed this life on 17th August 1834 aged 76 years. Also Elizabeth, his wife, daughter of the late Robert Postle, Gent, of Ingham who died Feb 4th 1849 aged 71 years”* There is no visible evidence of this vault. It may have been covered over when the chancel was re-carpeted in 2000.

On the south side of the chancel there is a tablet *“in memory of John Hylton of this Parish, who departed this life May 17th 1860 aged 66 years. Also of Harriet his wife who died June 24th 1858 aged 64 years”*. They are buried in Plot 110 in the churchyard.

On the south side of the nave next to the south door a tablet *“in memory of William Griffin who in the 73rd year of his age humbly committed his soul to God’s tender mercy in Jesu Christ the 9th day of March 1680”*
Also on the south side of the Nave are three oak tablets. Two are in memory of long-serving church wardens - Charles Edward Rash (1931-1967) and Herbert James Grimes (1969-1992). The third remembers Judith Bartram of Ruggs Hall, who left a substantial sum for the upkeep of this church and which provided the funds from which the renovations to the tower and kitchen extension were carried out.

The tapestry of the Last Supper hanging on the north wall of the nave was created by Linda Davey.

Nikolaus Pevsner, in his Guide to Norfolk Churches, mentions other brasses, which may have been covered over by the carpet that was laid during the 2000 refurbishment.

The Roll of Honour records the twelve men of the village who gave their lives in the two World Wars. Unusually the village does not have an external War Memorial.

The Bells

In 1817, a peal of six was cast by Thomas Mears of London and hung by Thomas & Joshua Hurry of Norwich to replace the previous ring of five. By 1857, after a period of twenty years of being silent, the bells were in need of rehanging once again, with the work being carried out by Thomas Edridge of Marsham. The chiming apparatus was installed in 1912.

The Bartram legacy enabled a wholesale restoration of the tower area to take place in 1997. This allowed the peal to be increased from six in the key of G to eight in the key of F, by adding a new treble and tenor, with a new B flat bell to bring the octave into tune. The old third bell, sounding B natural, was retained and all nine bells were then rehung. Work was carried out by the Whitechapel Bell Foundry.

As a result of this latest work, it is possible to ring either the new octave or Thomas Mears's original ring of six. It is believed that Malvern Abbey and Dunblane Cathedral are the only places with this combination.

The old oak frame, which was made in 1684, remains in the upper part of the tower. It is of a distinctively local type with an ingenious arrangement of interlocking foundation beams creating a massively strong structure from timbers that are too short to span this big tower. The ringing gallery was completed in 2000 when the work on the ground floor to create a meeting room was established.

Externally

The height line of the original nave roof can be seen against the east wall of the tower.

At the base of the south wall of the tower is what is believed to be the remains of a churchyard cross. Such crosses were erected in the Middle Ages as a memorial to all the people buried in the churchyard.

The south door came from the original church and was built around 1460. Around the door are three featured heads and two hanging shields, carved within one of the mouldings. The outer hood mould ends in two, unfortunately worn, heads each wearing a crown.

The footprint of the original side aisles can be made out on either side of the nave.

High up on the east wall in the apex is a plaque recording the rebuilding in 1742 and lower down two memorial stones have been inserted, with typical cherubs and a skull. Unfortunately, the inscriptions have weathered with time.

The earliest gravestone still visible in its original position dates from 1719 and is the grave of William Talman. He lived at Felmingham Hall and was Royal Architect to the court of William and Mary and architect to some of England's finest houses, including Chatsworth House in Derbyshire. It is sited in the area to the east of the chancel.

There are two Graves which are recorded as official War Graves by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission: Rees Atkins (WW1) – in the area to the west of the tower. He is remembered on the Roll of Honour in Banningham church but was born in Felmingham Leonard Hicks (WW2) – next to the gate leading to the car park

The churchyard has been extended twice, the latest being in 2008.

Other historical notes of interest

The leader of the Peasant's Revolt in Norfolk in 1381, John the Dyer or John Litetser, had a house in Felmingham. He found his livelihood threatened and led a large group of rebels in an attempt to seize Norwich. The Bishop of Norwich and his forces met the rebels on a heath just to the south of North Walsham. The Battle of North Walsham resulted in the defeat and capture of the rebels. As a result of his actions, Litester was hanged, drawn and quartered, with quarters being displayed at Norwich, Great Yarmouth, King's Lynn and at his house at Felmingham, as a deterrent to further rebel uprising.,

This historical record and guide was prepared by Revd Keith Dally in 2017, using a variety of sources, including:

Nikolaus Pevsner: The Buildings of England – North East Norfolk and Norwich (1962)

Lyn Stilgoe, A guide to the church compiled for Church Tours (2007)

William Bestelink: a short guide to the church (1987)

www.british-history.ac.uk/Felmingham

www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk

www.norfolkchurches.co.uk (Simon Knott 2008)