

Tasburgh St Mary the Virgin: notes by 'Lyn Stilgoe for Church Tours.



The round tower is decorated with rows of blank arcading within the flintwork. The top of the upper row is missing, probably removed when the belfry was added or rebuilt centuries later. A will of 1385 leaves money for the repair of the tower. The round-headed slit openings at the same height are framed with flint, though the later plain, single light, pointed belfry openings are formed of brick. There are five bells, four of which were originally cast around 1600 and were re-cast in 1900, with the fifth being added recently.

Approaching from the north the church appears to be a conventional medieval church with larger perpendicular windows inserted in the nave, enlarged since Saxon times. The porch has cut black flints on its north face. The south side of the church reveals more up-to-date work with a church room dating from 1978, and also made with black flints, alongside the nave, providing modern facilities, with an access from the south doorway of the nave. The south chancel has a shallow extension to its western half which accommodates the organ.

Internally, the tower has a low C15 arch with a modern door. From the inside of the tower it can be seen that the original taller round headed arch was formed of flints in Saxon times (see photo). There is an upper doorway which gave access to the first floor of the tower. On the west wall of the nave there is a large Royal Arms painted for George III in 1818, showing the Hanoverian arms on a small shield in the centre. George III was also King of Hanover, with his shield of the two golden lions of Brunswick, the blue lion of Luneberg, the white horse of Hanover and the central Crown of Charlemagne.

The deeply carved font with traces of a dark blue colour, perhaps original, dates from C14 and came here from the redundant church of St Simon and St Jude in 1938. The panels are foliated but some have small heads carved in the centre (see photo). There is a winding trail of stems of leaves around the corona below the bowl, and the octagonal panelled stem has two square fleurons to each panel.

The nave was reroofed in oak in 1909 with carved winded angels on the ends of the hammer-beams. The pews, pulpit, and the organ by Norman & Beard also date from this time. The white nave walls were decorated with four 'improving' texts in black letters framed with scrolls, two each side, probably in the C19. The texts come from Proverbs XXII, Romans XII, Ephesians IV and VI. In the south east corner is a simple piscine, indicating that there was an altar positioned here. It is now surrounded by an unusual Renaissance wall painting of a shell, urns and scroll dolphins, possibly as part of a memorial? (see photo). In the floor below is a brass plate with two shields and an inscription for Elizabeth Baxter +1587, the daughter and heiress of George Bludworth, with two

stone shields re-set in the wall above, perhaps from her tomb as the Baxter and Bludworth arms can just about be discerned. Her husband's tomb chest is in the chancel.

In the nave floor near the chancel step is a C17 brass showing a coat of arms, embellished with all its mantling and an inscription for Dorothe Burman +1642, daughter of Anthony Drury of Besthorpe.

The window at the west end of the north chancel has a small incised panel of monotone glass showing a knight in armour flanked by his two wives. The knight is William Newce +1610, father of Thomas Newce +1629 remembered with his wife Margaret +1632 in the wall tablet further east along the north wall. On the south side of the sanctuary in the position of the former sedilia is a stone tomb chest for Thomas Baxter who built Rainsthorpe Hall and then died in 1611, with a stone baroque arch filling the space behind. The four shields on either side of this ogee arch are for the Baxter, Drake, Tollemache and Bludworth families, with the three larger shields on the chest showing Baxter impaling the other families. On the floor between the rails and the altar is a brass inscription, between the shields of Baxter and Bludworth, for Elizabeth the daughter of Thomas and Elizabeth Baxter who died in 1586 aged 16.

The east window contains glass of 1903 as a memorial for members of the Mackintosh and Ficklin families with Jesus healing the blind man Bartimaeus, Caritas (Charity) with children and Jesus blessing a child. Also in the sanctuary is a curious bench end on the Bishop's chair. The flat side of the poppy head shows a man holding a bishop's mitre and back to back with him is a man holding a shield with the Arms of the Diocese of Norwich, three mitres, impaling another set of arms, no doubt for a Bishop of Norwich. The lower 'knobs' of the poppy head have carved female heads looking in opposite directions.