

The Church of St. Andrew, Claxton

When the commissioners of William the Conqueror were collecting information for the Domesday book in the 1080's, the rich farmland of the Yare valley was the most thickly settled part of England. It was those people who bequeathed our churches to us, and they still stand, not only as monuments to a past faith, but as places where the unchanging message of the Gospel can be heard, and where all may find the refreshment of prayer and a faith by which to live.

At the survey Godric, the King's steward held the Lordship including Claxton which had previously been granted by the King to Ralph Earl of Norfolk. Ralph was deprived of the Lordship when he rebelled.

Before the Conquest the land had been held by two freemen under the protection of the Saxon Thanes Aslac and Lefrick.

The commissioners recorded the existence of the church, seven freemen and six others, one horse, two cows and 200 sheep. The total land holdings amounted to some seventy seven acres. The rest would probably have been forest.

The first recorded vicar was John Fowas in 1334.

Whilst the nave of our church is clearly Norman much alteration has been made since Norman times and there is little evidence other than the quoins at the corners of the nave, some straight line masonry in the south wall indicates earlier work.

The north and south doorways of the nave were inserted during the Early English period (13th century). There once existed a north aisle of three bays, but this was taken down many years ago. In 1809 Blomefield in his "Topography of Norfolk" records that in the north aisle stood "*an altar tomb of the Gawdy family enclosed with iron rails*". There are remains on the north side of the nave and the north wall has been filled in and later an early 19th century window added, it has characteristic 'Y' tracery. The western end of the aisle terminated to the east of the north doorway, which is an unusual feature of East Anglian churches. The south side of the nave has two windows in the decorated style, of which the easternmost; which is square headed, is most attractive and has unusual tracery. This window was probably reshaped during the Perpendicular period (1350-1550).

The chancel was rebuilt in 1873 by the Trustees of Sir Charles Rich who was then only a minor.

The bold western tower is unbuttressed and dates from the 14th century. It has undergone considerable restoration, particularly during the Tudor period (1450-1550), when the unusual brick niches on the north, west and south sides, also the brick-edged belfry windows and possibly also the brick quoins at the corners, were inserted. The belfry windows have now lost their tracery, but were probably two-light Tudor brick windows, which would have looked most attractive.

Also of Tudor date is the south porch, which is built entirely of brick and adds greatly to the beauty of the church exterior.

The roof of the nave is thatched and the sanctuary roof is tiled.

Inside the church above the north door are the faded and somewhat decayed set of Royal Arms. Although these now bear the initials of George I they display the quarterings of Queen Anne. Obviously the initials were altered when the new monarch came to the throne. Also on the north side can be seen the three-bay arcade which formerly divided off the north aisle. This has octagonal piers.

The scissorbeam roof was greatly restored in 1928, but gives a very good idea of what the interior of a thatched roof would have looked like in medieval times.

The octagonal font is a very fine example of its type. Around the stem are four lions and beneath the bowl are angels and a band of flourons. The eight panels of the bowl have carved shields, alternating with lions and roses, and flourons in the borders of each panel. On the shields are carved the following emblems:-

The Passion (south east)

A Lion (north east) the de Kerdiston Arms

The Trinity (north west)

The Cross of St. Andrew Patron Saint of the church (south west)

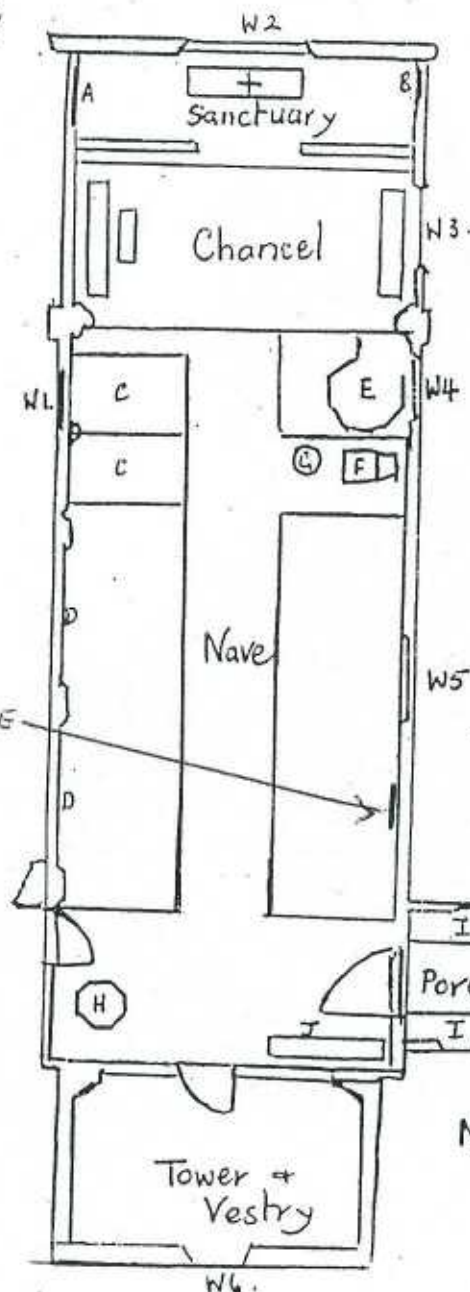
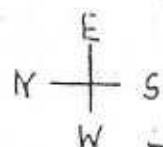
The Communion Table is Stuart and has been in use over 200 years. It was restored in 1977 in memory of Michael Allhusen.

In the tower there are three bells made by William Brend in 1630. They were donated by the Gawdy family in memory of Sir Henry Gawdy who died in 1620. A fine monument to Robert Gawdy was erected in the sanctuary in 1637. The Gawdy family lived in the manor from 1558 to 1697 when the last Gawdy died leaving no heir. The first Gawdy, Sir James, was a judge of Common Pleas. Robert Gawdy married a daughter of Sir Nathaniel Bacon of Stiffkey who was Chancellor of the Exchequer to Elizabeth I. Obviously the family had great social standing and no doubt the church benefited as a result. Blomefield also noted that *"On the north wall of the chancel was a neat monument, but much damaged, by the fall of a ladder on it....."* Restoration is obviously not just a modern concern.

The silver Elizabethan chalice and paten were made in Norwich in 1567 and are fine examples of the 16th century silversmith craft. The church bible was **"Imprinted at London by Robert Barker. Printed to the Kings most Excellent. ANNO 1617"** and before the commencement of the text in bold capital letters is the following **"TO THE MOST HIGH AND MIGHTIE PRINCE JAMES, BY THE GRACE OF GOD KING OF GREAT BRITAIN, FRANCE AND IRELAND. Defender of the Faith"**.

We sincerely hope you will all agree that in our little church we have something which is well worth preserving for your children and generations to follow.

Should you wish to see the chalice and paten or the bible please contact K Yates on Thurton 717.



Key.
 A. Gawdy Memorial
 B Double Piscina
 C. Box Pews - to be removed.
 D. Filled in arches to lost aisle
 E Pulpit
 F Prayer Desk
 G Lectern.
 H Font
 I Bench Seat
 J Chest

Not Drawn
 to Scale

Welcome to St. Andrew's Church - a church standing in the heart of the country, about a mile to the south of the village. The 14th century tower with flint walls holding up its head proudly above the thatched roof of the church can be seen for some distance. Very fine views over the Yare Valley can be obtained from the churchyard.

It is worth noticing -

The thatch-like basket work through the trussed rafters inside.

The Medieval windows which light the narrow nave.

The filled in arches of the north nave wall that led to a vanished aisle.

The decayed set of Royal Arms above the north doorway bearing the initials of George I, but displaying the quarterings of Queen Anne.

The octagonal font adorned with roses and lions, angels at the corners and lions round the base.

The box pews dating probably from the 18th century and the bench pews were added in 1965.

Communion Table - Stuart - recently restored in memory of Michael Allhusen.

The double piscina.

A monument to Sir Henry Gawdy erected in 1637.

Elizabethan chalice and paten 1567-8.

American Reed Organ.

Bible 1617.

ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH - CLAXTON



CLAXTON CHURCH

But this church is more than a building. It is a place where God has been worshipped for many years. Its use and attendance has fluctuated from time to time, but through all the changes throughout the world we know that God, through Jesus Christ, is the same - yesterday, to-day and forever. The fact that as a Christian family we still meet together to find peace, to pray, to be forgiven and to be spiritually fed makes this a very special place.

Please remember us in your prayers that our faith may be strengthened and help us by any contribution that you can spare to maintain our building.

