

ST PETER AND

ST PAUL

TUTTINGTON

A Short Guide to the Church



BACKGROUND

The first reference to the Parish is in 1044 with the name spelt as Totington and Tutintune a little later. The name means the 'tun' (enclosure or homestead) of Tutta's people.

The parish is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. The patronage was given by Agelwin (Lord of the Manor) to St Benet's Abbey, which is near Horning, some time before the Norman Conquest. This was confirmed by a Charter of Edward the Confessor.

There is a reference to a chapel at Meton-he, dedicated to St Botolph, possibly to the north of the present Church.

The first recorded Rector is John, presented to the living in 1234 by the Abbot of St Benet's Abbey.

In 1257, a Vicarage was endowed in addition to the Rectory. At the Reformation under Henry VIII the patronage passed to the Crown, and in 1600 on to the Bishops of Ely. It is now with the Bishops of Norwich, and the Church Commissioners are lay Rectors.

THE CHURCH BUILDING

The Tower is one of 119 round towers in Norfolk; there are also 41 in Suffolk and 8 in Essex. This tower was probably built soon after the Norman Conquest of 1066, the exact date being uncertain. The upper part was altered later – the belfry windows have ‘Y’ tracery in the style of the early 1200s. There is a belfry window on each of 4 sides of the tower.

The spire was built in 1750 and replaced a taller one which had fallen into disrepair. The red brick parapet was added either at the same time or early in the 19th century. Note also the bands of flints at 5 feet and 20 feet levels.

The reason for round towers is uncertain. One theory is that there is not enough local stone for the corners, although there are square towers and buildings of this period. Another theory is that they were originally defensive positions, perhaps with no Church building attached. To support this, in some towers there is a doorway high up the wall, so the ladder for reaching it can be drawn up afterwards. There is not one here. This tower is not in a strategic position for a defensive function and, as it was built after the Norman Conquest, it may be using a prevailing style of building. It remains the oldest part of the present building.

There were 3 bells in the reign of Edward VI; later there were 4. Three were sold either in 1750 or 1800. The number 2 bell remains and was recast in 1852. It was rehung in 1986 when the tower was repointed.

The Chancel is the next oldest part of the Church, dating back to circa 1300; the windows are decorated in style. A priest’s door is on the south side.

The Nave was rebuilt in 1450. There are six large windows, most perpendicular in style, but the middle ones on each side are in decorated style. A parapet runs along the top of the north and south walls with a gutter behind it. The Nave was restored in 1884 at a cost of £500.

The porch is of 2 storeys, but the floor to the upper room is missing. The use of this room is uncertain, but it could have been a room for the priest. Notice the empty niche over the entrance; a statue would have been in it up to the Reformation.

THE CHURCH INTERIOR

By the main door is a doorway to the staircase leading to the room over the porch. The room is known as a parvise. There is a small doorway of the 13th century leading into the tower. The outline of the bricked-up doorway on the north wall may be observed.

The Font is octagonal, made in the 1400s. The sides have shields, some of which may have had carvings of the instruments used in Christ's Passion. Underneath the bowl are alternately 4 lions and 4 roses. The oak font cover is dated 1638.

Glass – There are some fragments of medieval stained glass in the tracery of the middle windows on each side in the Nave.

The Pulpit is also made of oak and dated 1635. A wrought iron hour glass stand is fixed to it.

The main features of the Nave are the medieval pew ends. There are 14 carvings of figures of exceptional quality. On the south (right) side from the font are:

1. an elephant and castle (or howdah) with a face looking out on the pew side
2. a squirrel
3. a dog
4. a fox carrying a goose
5. a griffin attacking a man
6. a man with a viol or lute
7. a lion

On the north (left) side from the font are:

1. a man beating a tabor or drum
2. a leopard (or possibly a sheep)
3. a woman with a basket of poultry and a fox eating the contents
4. a milkmaid with a churn
5. a dragon
6. a wild man of the woods (woodwose) with a club
7. a cat

There are two remains of the Rood Screen and Loft which were in the Chancel arch (a rood is a crucifix). To the left of the arch is a door to the rood stairs leading to the loft. To the right is a corbel quite high up with the face of a dragon, which supported the rood beam.

In the Chancel the choir stalls also have medieval poppy heads, but with a foliated design. The Altar is a Jacobean table dated 1632.

To the right of the Altar the piscina has an unusual side opening as well as the main one. Next to it is a plain seat under the window known as the sedilia. In front of the Altar rail are memorials with fine carvings to the Elwin family.

The Chancel was restored in 1889 and the windows in 1904. The restoration cost £350 and was met by the lay Rectors, then the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. They, together with grants and private donations, met the cost of further restoration work in 1981 and 1988.

The Plate is kept in the Cathedral Treasury and consists of a Chalice made in Norwich in 1567, a pre-Reformation Paten, a pewter flagon and a pewter alms dish. The Registers date to 1544.

(W.B. Jan 1989)