

Towers and bells

A former tower was destroyed by lightning in 1740. At least five bells originally hung in the tower. A brief for rebuilding passed the Great Seal in 1745 and three bells were hung in the new steeple in 1755. However this, in turn, was pulled down as unsafe in 1883.

The Great Bell bears the inscription Thomas Gardiner, Sudbury, fecit 1734 and stands with the Second Bell at the west end of the nave. The Little Bell, inscribed Johannes Clarke hanc fecit campanum 1599 is now mounted in a small wooden belfry outside the north entrance.



The Parish Church of All Saints, Wimbish with Thunderley, Essex

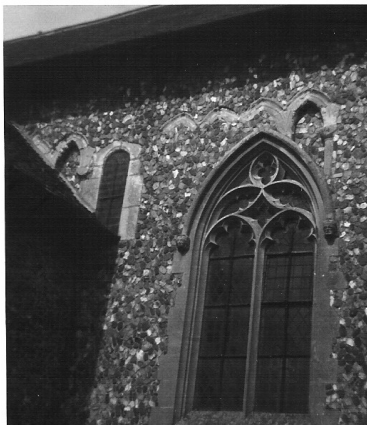
If you stand in the centre of the church directly opposite the entrance doors looking towards the altar, you are in the nave. Between you and the altar there is an oak screen which separates the nave from the chancel and the communion rail in front of the altar separates the chancel from the sanctuary.

On your left a row of columns separates the nave from the north aisle, known as Thunderley aisle at the far end of which another screen leads to the Thunderley chapel; now used as a vestry.

The parishes of Wimbish and Thunderley became one in 1425. Today Thunderley is the northern district of the parish, nearest to Saffron Walden. The name is retained by Thunderley Hall Farm and Thunderley Parsonage. In 1963 a great key, made between 1560 and 1600 and almost certainly that of the church, was ploughed up on the site and hung in this building in a glass case until it was stolen some years later.

Nave

The nave was built in the first half the 12th century by the Fitzwalter family. In earlier times a smaller, wooden church would have stood on the site. The nave was constructed of coarse pebbles with dressings of grey limestone and clunch and lengthened probably at the end of the 13th century when the north aisle was added. In the 15th century the chancel was rebuilt and the south porch (through which you entered) added, with its parvise; an upper room used by priests. Traces of original Norman windows can still be seen from the outside.



The south doorway and wall arcading are fine examples of 12th century work, while the double door belongs to the time of Henry VII. Above it are New Testament texts and the Ten Commandments on a painted board bearing the date 1580.

It seems likely that the holy water stoup located in the porch was damaged by Cromwell's men as they roamed the countryside after the army, marching on London for its pay, was halted at Saffron Walden.

Further restoration was carried out in the 19th century, when the west wall and chancel were rebuilt. The Caen stone font with its green marble columns was presented to the church in 1881. At this time the organ was also rebuilt and enlarged.

Set in the wall, to the medieval piscina.

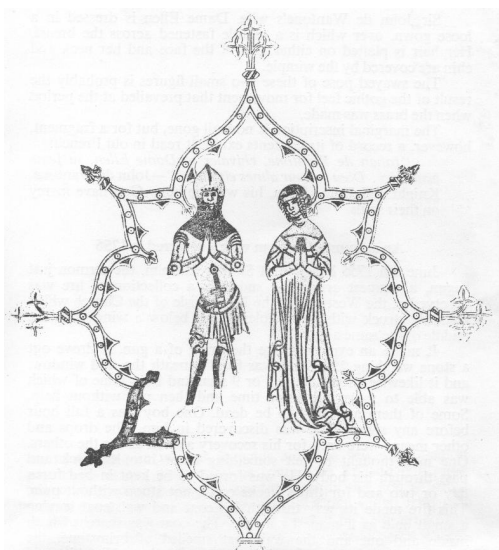


right of the organ, is a

Thunderley aisle and chapel

The Tudor roof of the north aisle has a rose in one spandrel with the date 1534. At the west end is a quatrefoil window.

The brass at the east end is among the oldest in Essex. It is one of the few surviving cross brasses, being of the class known as octofoil floriated crosses. The delicate stem originally rested on the back of an elephant; the badge of the Beaumont family. It depicts Sir John de Wantone and his wife, Ellen, nee Tiptoft. Sir John was Sheriff of Essex and Hertfordshire, fought at the battle of Crecy and died in 1347.



A palimpsest brass depicting Joan Wiseman nee Strangman c1570 was lost in 1868 and a fragment can be seen in the British Museum.

The Thunderley chapel was built c1340. Some materials from Thunderley church are believed to have been incorporated in its construction. The oak screen and heraldic stained glass are late 14th century; the shields in the east window show the arms of the Fitzwalter, Badlesmere, Tiptoft and Aspoll families.

Hidden by the organ is a stone in the floor commemorating Aurelius Piercy Wiseman of Broadoaks, killed in London in a duel in 1684.

A stone marks the grave of Elizabeth Glanville, who was a very fine entomologist for her time and her scientific letters are still of interest to students of that discipline.

Rev Thomas Carter, vicar of Wimbish 1715-1768 is also buried in the chapel. He recorded in the parish register a detailed account of the thunderbolt which struck the church during matins on Whit Sunday 1765.

A commemorative board beside the organ records that Thunderley aisle was restored and resealed in 1879.

An account of a storm which occurred in 1756

June 6th 1756 being Whit Sunday at 3pm the sermon just begun, a tempest arose and suddenly a collection of fire was observed at the West end of the North aisle of the church which instantly struck with great violence just below a window in the middle of the same aisle.

It made an explosion like the firing of a gun. It drove out a stone weighing 29lbs that was fixed beneath the said window, and it likewise struck down 8 or 9 men and boys none of which was able to move for some time and then not without help. Some of them appeared to be dead. One boy was a full hour before any sign of life was discovered in him. The drops and other means were used for his recovery as well as for the others. One man thought he felt something enter into his back and pass through his body. He was forced to be kept in bed for a day or two and for three weeks could not stoop without pain. This fire made its way through his coat and waistcoat leaving a small hole as if made by a shot. The coat was scorched both inside and out and the waistcoat smelled of brimstone, the scorching being about the size of a crown piece. His shirt and back were scorched down to his hip, the skin was raised from his hip which gave him excessive pain. A small piece was melted out of the back of a knife in his trouser pocket. Several others had their hands and legs scorched and likewise suffered violent pains. A boy was killed – only one woman was hurt having one hand one leg very much scorched – she had to be carried home. There was a strong smell of sulphur and smoke in the church.

The fire now seen in the church seemed to go out of the chancel door. On further inspection the following was observed.

The coping stones on the NW corner of the newly built steeple were broken and several bricks under it were forced out. The fire appeared to have entered the church at seven places through a window in the West aisle directly opposite the steeple. The window lead having melted, the glass scorched looking white on the outside and black within. Where the fire touched the stones of the window frame they were made black even on the outside. No glass was beaten out though in one place it was shattered into many pieces like rays meeting at a centre about the size and shape of a crown piece.

The glass was not broken so far as it was scorched. From this window the force seems to have been directed against the steeple, the bricks being shattered in several places. From the steeple it appears to have returned with great violence towards the same window, for the bottom of the frame is marked as if struck with a bullet which loosened it and forced its way quite through the jointing and underneath a large stone weighing 77lbs and made a broad black mark in its passage and a considerable crack in the brickwork under the stone. From here it directed its course right up the church and besides, making the havoc before described, battered the wall in several places.

Rev. Thomas Carter – vicar.

All Saints' Church

Wimbish with Thunderley



c1880