

## SS Simon and Jude

According to Domesday Book 'Bishop Aelmer held the church of St Simon and St Jude before 1066, later Herfast, now William; three-quarters on one mill, half an acre of meadow and one dwelling are attached to this and it is not of the bishopric but of Bishop Aelmer's patrimony'. (LDB 1. 63 (117b)).

Although the land was alienated in the Conqueror's reign, the rights over the church remained with the bishop until about 1200 when they were transferred to the Archdeacon on Norwich. Blomefield suggests

'There was anciently a CHAPEL OF ST. SIMON AND JUDE standing in this parish on the east side of the *Cook-row*, it adjoined to the north part of the site of the *Bishop's* house, and was originally founded as a private *oratory or chapel* to it; in 1314, it was in use, and then belonged to *St. Giles's hospital*, at the expense of which house, it was covered with reed'.

It seems that the private chapel was not, by then, the parish church, if it ever had been. The most likely scenario is that a new purpose-built church and churchyard were created nearby, where they still stand. By 1297, Thomas Silvester held the deaneries of Norwich and Taverham and the churches of Crostweyt by Norwich and St Swithin in Norwich as well as SS Simon and Jude. When he died in 1329, the bishop separated the churches and the deaneries. The earliest fabric in the present church is very much of this period (c.1310-20), suggesting that it had been relocated with a view to becoming independent of the deanery, the bishop subsequently appointing a rector.



The chancel preserves its plan from the early fourteenth century, as indicated by the easternmost buttresses and the tracery design of three of the windows. Each of the angle buttresses supports a once elegant niche, with a cusped arch above and projecting corbel below – no doubt for a statue. The obvious figures would be the two dedicatory saints, perhaps even with their 'Norwich' attributes of boat and fish, rather than the more usual saw or sword (Simon) and club or halberd (Jude). Stylistically, both arch and corbel are reminiscent of work done on, for example, the Ethelbert Gate and the Canary Chapel in the 1310. The three-light cusped intersecting window tracery (shown left) belongs to this phase and is very close to the tracery pattern in the aisles of the cathedral nave, attributed by Veronica Sekules to the

episcopate of John Salmon (1299-1325). Most significant of all, however, is the exterior fabric of the chancel walls, which employs squared black flints, red brick alternating with flint for the voussoirs over the windows and the white limestone of the windows themselves. The effect is thus strongly polychromatic and it set a fashion that was to persist in the city and county for the best part of two

centuries. Some commentators (the Norwich Survey authors, for example) have regarded this fashion as 15<sup>th</sup>-century. But the way the flints are coursed to blend into the relieving arches over the windows strongly imply that they are all of one date. The lower reaches of the chancel arch are probably of the same period. They are badly fire-damaged and indicate the likely cause of the renewal of the nave and tower in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century.

This later phase of building work is indicated by a number of testamentary bequests. Perhaps most notable is the 1449 will of citizen and alderman William Grey who requested burial in the arch (which is still visible) on the north side of the church in the presence of the altar of St Mary. He left 40s to the reparation of the west tower and to the church 100s or a fodder of lead (NRO NCC Aleyne 26v-27r). It seems that the nave was substantially complete by 1446 (apart from the roof), when John Selby, chaplain, requested burial by his mother's and father's window (NRO NCC Wylbey 122v-123r).

The style of the nave window tracery (shown right) and remnants of the glazing are certainly consistent with such a date. At the same period some alterations were made to the chancel, including a new SE window (s11) and a roof supported on angel corbels. How far this work was also necessitated by the fire is not certain; it was quite possible that after more than a century some modernisations were thought worthwhile.



It would be most unusual for a nave to be built prior to a new tower; usually towers were built and allowed to settle before an adjoining nave was constructed. The reason this is not the case at SS Simon and Jude is likely to be that had already been a tower on the site, therefore on solid foundations, and what was being undertaken was effectively a rebuilding. That is borne out by the details of the mouldings of the west door of the tower which could well be early 14<sup>th</sup> century and contemporary with the chancel, so perhaps only the upper levels of the tower were renewed.

The major remaining question is whether the nave was rebuilt on its earlier footprint or whether the opportunity was taken to widen it. There is no clear evidence either way, though the form is quite consistent with the earlier 14<sup>th</sup> century date.