

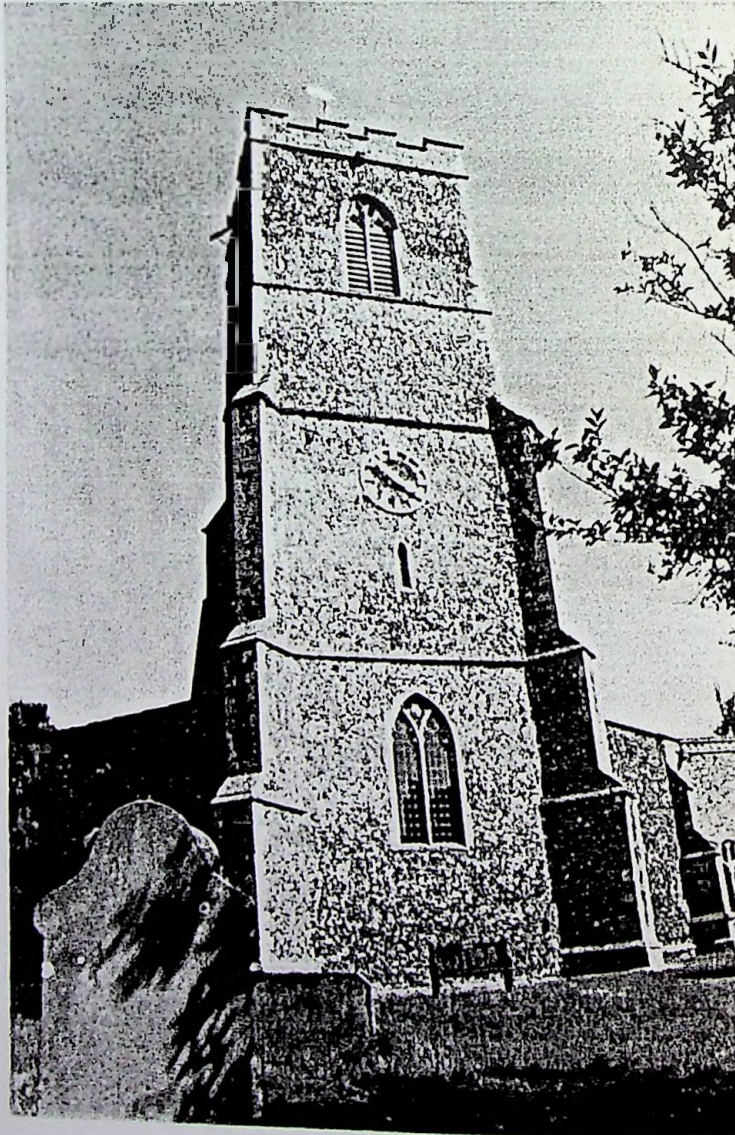
St Peter and St Paul Fressingfield

A History and Guide to the Parish Church

£2.00 will go towards the cost of this guide
and the upkeep of the church fabric

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
History	
The Village Of Fressingfield	2
The Origin Of The Church	2
The Completion Of The Church	3
The Church in 1800	4
Gains and Losses	6
19th Century Restoration	7
Guide	
The Exterior	8
The Interior	10
The Benches	12
Interesting Features	16
Monuments	17
The Bells and Clock	19
The Organ	20
List of Vicars	21
Postscript	23



Introduction

It is nearly 70 years since the Revd. W.R. Raven-Hart, then vicar of the parish, produced the last History and Guide of the Church of St Peter and St Paul, Fressingfield. Its 32 large glossy pages provided a wealth of information for the historian and the antiquarian, but sadly it has long been out of print.

Now we are deeply indebted to Mr. Roy Tricker of Felixstowe for all the research and care he has put into this new and much more readable History and Guide of our beautiful church. What Mr. Raven-Hart was able to do in the comparative leisure and luxury of clerical life in Edwardian Times, I could not possibly have done in present circumstances. This makes me the more grateful to Mr. Tricker for all the time and skill that he has devoted to this booklet which will I am sure be greatly appreciated by many local people as well as by the hundreds of visitors who come to our church each year.

Warm thanks are also due to Mr. Norman Reynolds for his illustration and to Mrs Nesta Evans, our local historian, who very kindly read through the draft copy of Mr. Tricker's work and has pronounced it to be both scholarly and accurate.

In his preface to Mr. Raven-Hart's booklet, Bertram Pollock, Bishop of Norwich (the diocese to which Fressingfield belonged till 1914), expressed the hope that *"our ancient churches which have been hallowed through these many centuries by the presence of God and by the devotion of successive generations...(might still speak) to us, in the changed surroundings of our modern world, of 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day and forever'."* (Hebrew 3:8). This is what still matters most in the decades of the 20th century.....

Tom Pownall

March 1980

Fressingfield Vicarage

The Village of Fressingfield

Fressingfield is situated in the north of Suffolk, some 4½ miles south of Harleston. It is one of several picturesque villages to be found in the area of the Waveney valley. The parish is a large one, with an area of 4,618 acres. There are several fine houses and attractive old cottages. In 1086 the name of the village was Fessefelda, from the Old English 'Fyrsenfeld', meaning a furze-covered field, a derivation shared with Fersfield in Norfolk.

The **parish church** is numbered among the most interesting in the county which is noted for its fine churches. It stands upon rising ground at the centre of the village, set in a spacious churchyard. Beside it is the old Guildhall, now the '**Fox and Goose**', which was built in the first decade of the 16th century and was improved in 1616. This is a noteworthy example of brick and timber building and carved into the corner-post nearest the church porch is the figure of St. Margaret of Antioch, to whom the Guild Chapel in the church was dedicated.

The Origin of the Church

It seems that before 1320 there may have been **two distinct parishes** of Fressingfield and Chepenhall and that the union of these parishes meant that the parish church of Fressingfield needed to be enlarged; and it is from this time onwards that the building which we see today developed. Like most medieval churches, the structure gradually evolved over the centuries and was added to and altered as new styles of building became fashionable, money became available and restoration was necessary. The present church was not the first upon the site and during the restoration which took place last century, what was believed to be part of the apse of the **its predecessor** was unearthed.

The **earliest visible workmanship** which survives dates from c. 1320-30 and can be seen in the internal shafts and arch of the east window, also in the three-light north window of the north chapel and the doorway beside it, which were reset here (possibly from the chancel) when the North chapel was erected about 1511. The tower also exhibits architecture of the Decorated style of the first half of the 14th century, as does the west window of the south aisle (which may be a reset window or a modern addition). It is clear that by about 1350 the present nave, chancel and tower were in position.

The Completion of the Church

During the **late 14th and early 15th centuries** the aisles were added and the beautiful clerestorey windows were inserted to give more light to the nave. The south aisle was certainly in place by 1420, for it was about this time that the handsome south porch was built by Catherine de la Pole (of nearby Wingfield Castle), in memory of her husband, who died of dysentery at the siege of Harfleur, and her eldest son, who was killed at Agincourt. The final piece of major alteration to the fabric took place about 1511, when the north aisle was extended eastwards to form the Guild Chapel of St. Margaret. In August of that year, the will of John Bohun was proven. He bequeathed 10 marks for "*the newe bilding of an ile on the north side of the chancel*". In this extension the builders carefully reset the three-light window from the chancel and the doorway. In 1547, a Mr. Toppysfylde gave a silver pyx for this aisle.

The interior of the church by this time must have looked a blaze of colour. **Before the Reformation**, when the liturgy and the Bible were in the Latin tongue which were not understood by the majority of people, the parish church itself was the peoples' Bible and manual of Religious Education. Hence the walls, windows, screens etc. were covered with pictures and the woodwork and stonework were carved with figures and religious symbols. The magnificent nave roof was in place by the end of the 15th century and the fine set of benches were inserted about 1470.

Beneath the chancel arch was the great rood or crucifix, which proclaimed the central theme of our faith - Christ crucified. This was set above the elaborate rood screen and its rood loft. Some of the woodwork of the screen, also the staircase to the loft, still survive. Above, on the eastern gable of the nave, the **Sanctus bell** (given by William Bohun in 1496) would have rung out to announce the important parts of the Mass to the labourers in the fields.

After the Reformation, when the English Bible was freely available and the Book of Common Prayer made worship more meaningful, the need for much of the rich and colourful interior decoration ceased, and a tremendous amount of the beauty and colour disappeared from the churches. Even what remained underwent a further purge in the mid 17th century, when the Puritans destroyed what they believed to be 'superstitious images and inscriptions' in the churches. Doubtless Fressingfield was visited by the Earl of Manchester's agents for this purpose, although William Dowsing (from nearby Laxfield, and the official 'Parliamentary Visitor' for Suffolk) does not record a visit in his 'Journal'. So, by 1700, most of the medieval glass had gone from the windows, the rood and most of its screen had disappeared; and it was probably also about this time that the piscina (for washing Communion vessels) and sedilia (triple seat for priest) in the south wall of the sanctuary were filled in with plaster.

The church does, however, possess much which remains from medieval times, the most noteworthy features being its benches and its fine roof.

The Church in 1800

The ecclesiologists, **Edmund Gillingswater** and **David Elisha Davy** paid visits to the church during the 1790s and the early years of the 19th century. It is largely from their notes that we can build up a picture of the church interior before the extensive 19th century restoration. The whole of the west end was occupied by a "**handsome painted gallery**",

which was erected in 1700 (and described by another writer as "a large rectangular box on pillars, called a singing gallery"). Above it was a set of **Royal Arms of James II**, dated 1687. Gillingswater, in 1798, states that the gallery was originally erected for singers and adds "but now that pleasant and necessary part of devotion has been discontinued here for some time".

Against the wall on the north side of the church was another gallery, erected c. 1706 by Mr Etheridge of Vicar's Hall for use by himself and his family. The **font** is described as being "totally defaced" and crowned by a plain wooden cover. Near the south side of the chancel arch stood a fine three decker **pulpit**, dated 1609, which incorporated a hexagonal pulpit stage, a priest's stall and a clerk's stall. It was all painted dark brown and the reading desks were supported by richly carved brackets.

In the **chancel** were some large box-pews and the Communion table (which is now in the south chapel) was raised on two steps and railed off. Above it were four framed compartments on which were painted the Lord's Prayer, Apostles Creed and Ten Commandments. In the north wall of the chancel was an aumbry (enclosed recess for Communion vessels) with an oak shelf (which had been blocked by 1863) and in the south wall could be seen the band of stonework above the sedilia, which had been filled in. Somewhere in the east wall of the chancel was an arch, which Gillingswater believed to have led at one time to a building attached to the east end of the church.

The **medieval benches** stood more or less where they do now and the roofs were described as handsome. There were traces of medieval colouring remaining on the roof timbers at the east end of the south aisle. At the time when Davy visited the church, there was more medieval **glass** remaining in the windows than there is today. The east window of the north aisle contained six very mutilated human figures which were thought to be Apostles. In a western window of this aisle were remains of traceried architectural canopies, flowers and one shield. The west window of the south aisle contained in its tracery two more

human figures, described as “an ancient person giving benediction and a person preaching”. Two shields remained in the window above the chancel arch and the letters B and W in circular components could be seen in one of the northern chancel windows. The south windows of the chancel contained a little more old glass than remains today. In the easternmost was another Breuse shield and in another window were seven shields. A second shield bearing the emblem of the Trinity could be seen in a north aisle window and Davy points out, when recording it in 1806, that “by the ignorance of the glazier it is placed upside down”!

Many of the **painted shields** at the bases of the wall-posts supporting the chancel and north chapel roofs were in place and Davy gives details of the arms displayed on them. In the north chapel were deposited the remains of the lower part of the rood screen, which then had traces of its original colour because it was “curiously carved, gilt and painted”.

Gains and Losses

Two important events took place during the first half of the 19th century - both recorded in the Ipswich Journal. The first was the addition of two new treble bells, increasing the peal to eight, in 1819. The other was a less happy occurrence, in 1834, when the church plate was stolen. The Ipswich Journal for December 13th of that year prints a notice by the Churchwardens offering a reward of £25 for the capture of “the person who did felonously enter the parish church of Fressingfield, broke open the parish chest and stole therefrom the Communion plate”. The haul consisted of a silver flagon, chalice with cover, alms dish and paten, all inscribed “*Deo servatori sacrum Ad usam ecclesiae de ffresenfeld Dioeces Norvic*”. The plate was of 17th century date and it is believed that **Archbishop Sancroft** presented it to the church.

19th Century Restoration

The latter half of the 19th century saw **two major restorations** of the church. The first, which took place about 1870, during the ministry here of Canon Colbeck, was concerned with the fabric of the building, when both aisles and the north porch were carefully restored. The renovators faithfully reproduced the medieval design in this work, without Victorian embellishments.

The **second restoration** was of the interior. It took place in 1888 and cost £800. The vicar here at the time was Canon J.J. Raven, the noted Suffolk antiquary and expert on church bells. The renovations involved the removal of the west gallery and box pews and the installation of the choirstalls and other benches, which were carefully designed to imitate the medieval benches which had survived. At this time the lower portion of the rood screen was replaced in its rightful position and, through the generosity of Mrs Heale of Whittingham Hall, the sedilia was restored to its former glory. The pulpit also arrived in 1888 and, twenty years later, the reredos was erected as a memorial to Canon Raven.

The Exterior

The **church** stands well back and it is worth standing back to view the building as a whole, from a distance, particularly to the north, where the churchyard slopes away from it.

The western **tower** is supported by buttresses on all four sides, reaching to the level of the nave roof. It clearly dates from the early 14th century, as can be seen from the west window. Tiny single windows light the chamber above and on the west side is the face of the clock, which was given in 1921 as a War Memorial. It replaced a one-handed clock with a diamond shaped face which was believed to have been given by Archbishop Sancroft in the late 17th century. The belfry windows date from a little later in the 14th century. These have pleasing tracery and are well proportioned. The flintwork of the embattled parapet is later than the rest of the tower, but at its base are four animal heads, of which those on the south side act as gargoyles to drain the rainwater from the tower roof.

The north and south **aisles** are lit by Perpendicular windows of early 15th century date, with the exception of the west window in the south aisle which has pretty tracery in the Decorated style of the preceding century. Notice in the north chapel wall, the reset early 14th century window and doorway. Both have interesting original corbel heads. The east windows of both aisles are good three-light Perpendicular windows. Above the aisles rises the handsome 15th century **clerestorey**, with sets of six fine Perpendicular windows each side. High in the east wall of the nave is another three-light window, a feature found in several East Anglian churches, giving valuable extra light to the medieval interior.

Crowning the eastern gable of the nave is the **Sanctus bell turret**. This is a beautiful and unusual feature and is thought to be the finest of its type in the county. It is built of stone (probably to house the new Sanctus bell given in 1496) and is a very fine structure, being supported by its own miniature buttresses, and having traceried panels on its north

and south sides. Above its carved parapet rise a central pinnacle surmounted by a cross.

The **chancel** has been greatly restored with red brick. On its north side is an early 14th century window with original corbel heads. The south wall is pierced by a pair of large Perpendicular windows, of which the westernmost has corbel heads. The east window, (as will be seen from inside) is not original, but is a later replacement of a 14th century window, although the original corbel heads remain. The east wall has been re-faced with knapped flints.

The **north porch** has been greatly restored, but it gives access to a good north doorway, which preserves its medieval door.

The **south porch**, by contrast, is magnificent and is certainly the most beautiful feature of the exterior. It was built by Catherine de la Pole c.1420 and was carefully restored during the 19th century. This is a wonderful tribute, not only to the de la Poles, but also to the 15th century stonemasons' craft. The south face displays some beautiful flushwork tracery (panelling in flint and stone), which can also be seen in the buttresses and at the base of the east and west walls. The noble entrance arch has an angel and the Wingfield arms at its apex and in its moulding can be seen crowns and fleurons (flowers). The hood mould is also studded with fleurons and rests upon crowned corbel heads (maybe representing King Henry V and Queen Catherine). The unusual drapery in the spandrels may be a later addition. Above the entrance are two fine roses between double flushwork panels. A small double window beneath a crocketed hood-mould gives light to the parvise, or upper storey. This is flanked by lofty canopied and vaulted niches crowned by clusters of pinnacles, also three-light traceried panels. The crested parapet is made up of stone quatrefoils and there are the bases of pinnacles at the corners, and an original stone figure on the south side. There is a fine gargoyle on the eastern side and a pair of gargoyles in the angle between the west wall and the south aisle wall (which encloses the staircase to the parvise).

The interior of the porch has a tierceron-vaulted roof, resting upon restored corbels depicting the symbols of the four Evangelists. There are eight bosses; seven with foliage and one (the southernmost) with the coat of arms of the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds. There is also a large central boss, depicting the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, surrounded by radiating figures. The inner entrance arch, which has been greatly restored, contains a fine pair of 15th century doors.

The Interior

The **south doorway** gives access to a bright and cared-for interior, which shelters many treasures and items of interest.

The aisles are separated from the nave by **arcades** of three bays, with octagonal piers and moulded capitals, of early 15th century date. The chancel arch is in the same style, but the arch which divides the north aisle from the chapel is 16th century.

There is no western tower arch, as is found in most churches, but in its place is a large **west doorway**, the door of which incorporates medieval timbers.

The crowning glory of the nave is its superb single hammerbeam **roof**. This is an excellent piece of 15th century woodcarving, of which so much detail remains. What seems to be lost are the carved angels at the ends of the hammer beams and the carved figures at the bases of the wall-posts. There is a wide and nicely carved cornice running along the top of the nave wall on each side, beneath which, forming frames to the clerestorey windows, are cornice braces, with carved leaves in the spandrels. Above is a beautiful frieze of vine-leaf scroll, which is actually open fretwork, attached to the flat boards by wooden pegs. Fretwork tracery can be seen filling the spaces immediately above the hammer beams. The roof is supported by arch-braced collar-beams and in the ridge above two of these are original angels, holding shields. These are

located above the third collar beam from the west, facing east and above the fourth from the east, facing west. In the eastern span of the nave roof, at its ridge, can be seen a block of wood in which is a pulley. This is a rare survival of a rowell pulley. A rope passed through this and the small wooden projection in the eastern arch of the south arcade, and held in position the rowell light which hung at certain times in front of the rood.

The framework of the north **aisle roof** is medieval and there are carved wheels of different designs in the spandrels, also good wooden corbel heads supporting the wall-posts and above the arches on one side above the windows on the other. More corbel heads can be seen in the south aisle, although its roof is modern.

The **chancel roof** is medieval. This is an arch-braced roof, with moulded wall-plates. At the bases of the wall-posts are painted shields, displaying the **coats of arms** of some of the families who have had connections with Fressingfield. Although several such shields were here in 1790, it is clear that much restoration and renewal has taken place with these shields. The families of Garneys and Toppisfield are chiefly represented here. Similar shields can be seen in the north chapel roof, representing the families of Brewes, Clouting, Hansard and Sharledon, amongst others.

The octagonal **font** is plain and of uncertain date. If it ever had carving, this was doubtless removed by the Puritans. Nearby is the medieval door to the **parvise stairway**. There is an opening from the parvise into the church, which was blocked until the 19th century. These rooms above church porches are sometimes called priest's rooms, although here it may have been used as a muniment (or document) room.

Some interesting framed **sketches** can be seen in the vestry. These were produced in the 19th century and show how little the exterior of the church has altered since they were made. They are: Brandon's sketch of the interior, looking west; Henry Davy's sketch of the exterior (1821); Bishop's sketch of the porch (1833); and sketches of the bench-ends here and at Weybread.

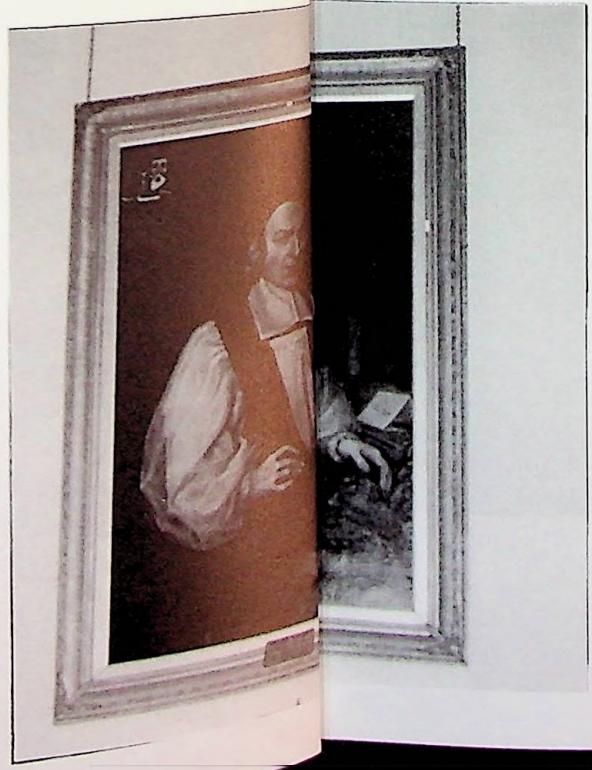
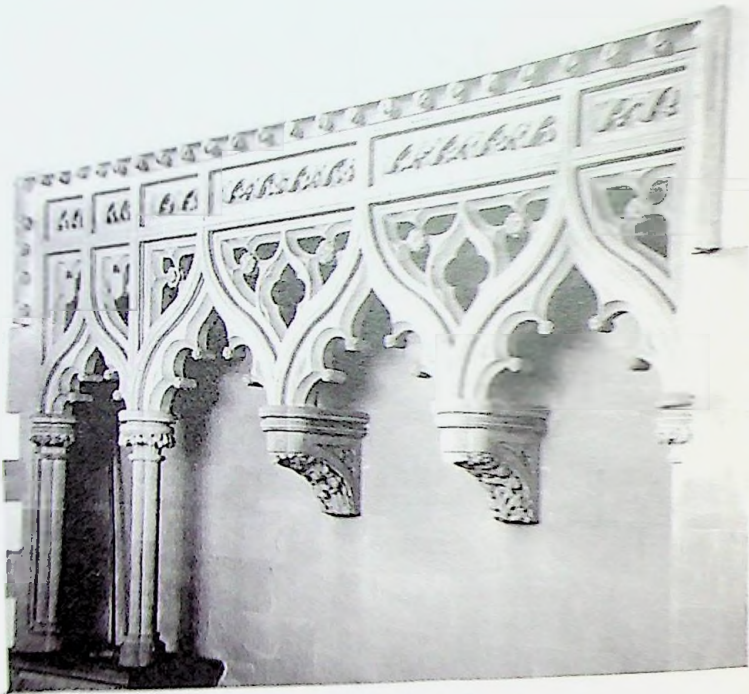
In the **south chapel** wall can be seen an ogee-headed **piscina** with an octfoil drain. Piscinas were used for washing the sacred vessels and the priest's hands at Holy Communion and thus we know that there was an altar here in medieval times. Some authorities have stated, in fact, that this was the Guild Chapel, although it is commonly believed that this was on the north side of the church. The ornate Jacobean Holy Table, of early 17th century date, stood for many years in the sanctuary. Nearby is a large medieval iron-bound **chest**, which is secured by three locks and was the parish strong-box. Usually the vicar and the two Churchwardens each held a key, so that the chest could not be opened unless all three were present.

The Benches

One of the greatest treasures of this interior is its magnificent set of medieval oak benches, believed to be among the finest in the county. They date from about 1470 and they still stand upon their original kerbs, in more-or-less their original positions. A few have been removed and many have been mutilated, partly by the Puritans in the mid 17th century and partly, according to an account of 1863 "to permit the fixing of some extremely ugly modern pews" (which fortunately have not survived). Parts of old benches can be seen incorporated into later benches in the south chapel. The main sets of nine benches each side of the nave merit details description. These have beautiful carved and traceried ends, with a variety of interesting figures for armrests, and terminate in the threefold 'poppyhead' motif. The backrests of the majority of these benches are carved with a wavy pattern, enclosing shields, flowers, trefoils and mouchettes. The back benches on each side are of singular interest because of the carvings beneath the backrests, which has given them the titles of the Passion bench (north) and the Dedication bench (south).

Detailed descriptions of the benches follow:-







In the **Passion bench**, circles made up of three mouchette (curved 'dagger') designs alternate with shields displaying the emblems of our Lord's Passion which are, from north to south: The cock crowing, the hand raised to strike and the pot for the vinegar mixed with gall, the IHS (representing the inscription on the cross), the pillar, scourge and cords, the nails, cross and crown of thorns, the sponge and spear, the ladder, hammer and pincers, the seamless coat and the (recently replaced) dice.

The **Dedication bench** has lovely traceried patterns in circles and quatrefoils, some containing shields which display (north-south) the Cross of St. Andrew (brother of St. Peter), and 'endless cord', the letters PE and papal crown (St. Peter was believed to have been the first Bishop of Rome), the crossed keys of St. Peter, the crossed swords of St. Paul.

The bench ends are worth examining. Their traceried ends and carved figures are as follows:-

North Aisle (west-east)

1. Hanging shield with coat of arms, possibly of the Talbot family (a crown and two dogs).
Figure - the haunches of an animal (maybe the bull of St. Luke).
2. Four-light Perpendicular tracery with stepped transoms.
Figure - haunches of an animal with cloven hoofs.
3. A beautiful wheel, above two-light panels containing quatrefoils and fleurons. Figure - lost.
4. Two-light windows above a four-light window and two wheels.
Figure - lost.
5. A large quatrefoil and two-light panels above.
Figure - bird, with fierce talons and head missing (maybe a wyvern).
6. Five-light Perpendicular tracery above four-light Decorated tracery.
Figure - seated human figure, much mutilated, with head missing.

7. Lovely emblem of the Blessed Sacrament (chalice and host) and the initials A.P. (for Alicia de la Pole - Chaucer's grand-daughter) above two-light Decorated traceried panels.
Figure - haunches of animal with a human head in front of it (a wolf, guarding the head of St. Edmund).
8. Linenfold panelling. Figure - entirely lost.
9. Lovely pattern of circles, with four-light panelling above and below.

Nave - North (west-east)

1. Three-light panels with crocketed tracery above.
Figure - seated angel with scroll (possibly the emblem of St Matthew).
2. A quatrefoil within a diamond, containing a flower, above a square divided diagonally. Figure - lost.
3. A quatrefoil above a four-light Decorated panel. Figure - lost.
4. A pattern of mouchettes and other shapes. Figure - lost.
5. A pattern of five-light Perpendicular panels, with stepped transoms and two wheels.
Figure - A seated human hooded figure, resting head on right hand.
6. Four-light tracery, with a trefoil at the centre and three wheels above.
Figure - Animal (with bushy tail) with a castle on its back.
7. Lovely crowned IHC (standing for our Lord's name) in a quatrefoil, with four-light panels above.
Figure - a superb winged and feathered beast (a griffin).
8. Linenfold panelling. Figure - entirely gone.
9. Good four-light panels, with crockets.

Nave - South (west-east)

1. Very mutilated, four-light Decorated panels and a blank shield.
Figure - lost
2. Patterns in lozenges above two-light Decorated tracery.
Figure - Seated female, with long flowing hair.
(maybe St. Cecilia - she appears to have held a cithern).
3. Three circles above four-light tracery.
Figure - St Peter: a fine seated figure holding a key.

4. Four-light Decorated traceried panels
Figure - Haunches only of animal.
5. Nice crowned IHC and five-light tracery.
Figure - lady with long flowing hair (maybe St. Margaret).
6. Lovely pattern of mouchettes containing flowers.
Figure - A man with cloak and hood, sitting on a stone, with a dog beside him (maybe St. Bernard or St. Roche).
7. Lozenges containing circles with patterns.
Figure - lost
8. Linenfold panelling. Figure - lost.
9. Four-light tracery with crockets.

South aisle (west - east)

1. Four-light Perpendicular tracery. A central lozenge with a quatrefoil.
Figure - A seated figure, with girdle round waist. Head missing.
2. Simple pattern. A central shield with the letter H.
Figure - a seated figure with head to one side (maybe St. Paul).
3. Attractive design in three vertical divisions. Figure - lost.
4. Pleasing pattern of Decorated and Perpendicular tracery.
Figure - St. Dorothy, seated, with basket of flowers or fruit.
5. A wheel of mouchettes in the centre.
Figure - Haunches only of an animal.
6. A joining of two odd halves, one with Perpendicular tracery and the other with Linenfold panelling. Figure - lost.
7. Good five - light tracery. Figure - lost.
8. Linenfold panelling. Figure - lost.
9. Interesting pattern of vertical wavy lines.

In these benches, note also the carved work on the supports to the figures and the different patterns on the leaves in the poppyheads. An interesting variety of medieval chairs provide seats for some figures.

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Interesting Features

On the east side of the chancel arch is a **hole**, through which passed the rope to operate the Sanctus bell in the turret above. Beneath the arch stood the **rood screen**. The framework of its base can still be seen, in its rightful position, but the remainder of the screen is missing. The rood-loft **staircase**, which led to the gallery at the top of the screen, is still in place. Its lower entrance can be seen in the east wall of the south aisle and the upper entrance also remains.

The **east window** is noteworthy - not for the tracery, which is 19th century, but for the circular shafts, capitals and moulding round the arch. This work is original, early 14th century, and we can imagine it filled (as it once was) with beautiful Decorated tracery. The capitals are embellished with foliage (and acorns on the south), also heads, facing each other across the window. There is an internal hood-mould, resting upon corbel heads.

The **sedilia** and **piscina** were restored to their former glory (having been filled with brick and plaster) by Mrs Heole's generosity, about 1888. Some original stone can be seen in the hood-mould (which has ball-flowers) at the eastern and western extremities. The medieval stonework is lighter in colour.

The chancel windows contain what remains of the church's **medieval glass**. The earliest can be seen in the tracery of the northern window (mostly foliage), which, like the window itself, dates from the early 14th century. The south-east window contains four shields made up from fragments of 15th century glass and the south-west window has a small shield with the emblem of the Holy trinity.

In the sanctuary floor, now hidden from view, is set the **mensa** (table top) of the medieval stone altar.

The **reredos** (and also the **lectern**) was given in memory of Canon J.J. Raven (Vicar 1885-1906) and the other sanctuary **panelling** is a memorial to his successor, Canon W. Raven Hart (Vicar 1907-19). The **pulpit** was presented by Mr J. Sancroft Holmes, in memory of his ancestor, Archbishop Sancroft, in 1887. The **choirstalls** are fine and worthy imitations of the medieval benches.

The eastern extension to the north aisle was formerly the **Guild Chapel of St Margaret**, but is now the organ chamber and vestry. The remains of a **piscina** can be seen in the south wall and the vestry partition is made up of 17th century **panelling**, probably from the former box-pews. The 14th century doorway, which may once have been the priest's doorway from the chancel, has internal moulding in its arch. The long **bench** in this chapel is thought by some to have been the original guild-seat. Although the seat itself may be ancient, the ends do not appear to be so.

The Monuments

The church possesses several **memorials** to people of the past who have had associations with it. Some of the earliest, set in the floor of the church, are now covered. They take the form of ledger slabs and plain burial slabs (some with indents of lost brasses and one with its brass remaining) and are the time-worn memorials of former Fressingfield VIPs.

In the north aisle are four medieval **burial slabs**. Two **slabs** in the centre aisle have matrices of male and female effigies above inscriptions and a further indent of an inscription is situated at the east end of the nave. In the chancel floor are two medieval slabs; one with the indent of a small chalice brass and inscription and the other with an indent of a small figure (or maybe another chalice). A chalice brass indicates the burial-place of a priest.

The only remaining **brass** is in the floor of the sanctuary. It commemorates William Brewes (died 1489) and his wife, Elizabeth. Their effigies remain (he is dressed in armour) above a Latin inscription. There were three shields, of which only one now remains. A facsimile of this brass has been set into the top of a table and can be seen at the back of the church.

There are a few **wall tablets** in the church, although none are of great artistic interest. Those on the chancel walls commemorate two former incumbents - the Revd Thomas Alsopp (died 1845) and his wife, Elizabeth, also the Revd Sir Henry Pix Heyman, who died in 1808. The Revd Edward Vaughan, who died in 1797 and Eleanor, his wife, are commemorated on the south aisle wall. There is an attractive wall plaque on the west wall of the nave, commemorating James Robert Adams, which has a Latin inscription.

In the south aisle is a **portrait** of Archbishop William Sancroft, Fressingfield's most famous cleric, whose tomb can be seen in the churchyard, immediately to the east of the porch. This portrait is a copy of one by P. Lens, which hangs in Emmanuel College, Cambridge. Sancroft was born at Fressingfield in 1617 and was brought up here. In 1662, he became Master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge (who are still patrons of this Living). He was appointed to the Deanery of St. Paul's, London in 1664 and after the Great Fire he set himself the task of having the Cathedral rebuilt, with Christopher Wren as the architect. His dedication to this work made him refuse the Bishopric of Chester in 1668. He became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1678 and, when James II came to the throne, he did his best to crush attempts to impose Roman Catholicism on the English people and refused to order the clergy to obey the King's command to read publicly a declaration of liberty of conscience for Romans and Dissenters and, with six other Bishops, drew up a petition against it. This resulted in his being put on trial, although he was later acquitted. Later, however, he refused, out of loyalty to the expelled king, to take the Oath of Allegiance to William and Mary and was ordered to resign his Archbishopric. And so at the age of 72 he retired to Fressingfield, and is thought to have lived at Ufford Hall, the

home of the Sancroft family: this is a lovely 16th century house at the southern end of the parish. He died in 1693 and is buried beneath a simple chest-tomb. He composed the inscription on the tomb himself and also chose the text in the wall of the South Porch beside it: in both he characteristically drew attention to the need to live in readiness for our Lord's second coming. The Archbishop loved Fressingfield church and in his retirement enjoyed a firm friendship with John Sheppard, its vicar. The church and parish, along with some neighbouring ones, have benefited greatly from his gifts and benefactions.

The Bells and Clock

The tower contains a peal of **eight bells**. In 1553 there were only four and a Sanctus bell. One of the four, however, remains and is now the tenor bell of the present peal. Details of the bells are as follows:-

1. By T. Mears (London), 1819
2. By T. Mears (London), 1819
3. By Thomas Newman, 1741
4. By Thomas Newman, 1741 Inscribed with the Churchwardens' names
5. By George Mears (London), 1866
6. By Thomas Mears (London), 1817
7. By Thomas Mears (London), 1817
8. A medieval bell, cast before 1460. Has an inscription which reads "Sanctorum meritis Pangamus Cantica Laudis".

An unusual feature of this peal is that is rung anticlockwise. The tenor bell weighs 17½ cwt. Sadly, the oak structure which binds the bells is currently unsafe and awaits repair.

The tower **clock** was made in 1921 by G. & F. Cope & Co. of Nottingham, makers of Westminster's Big Ben. It replaced a much older clock with a single hand, and was given as a War Memorial. After the death in 1968 of William Etheridge, the church's last sexton, the winding mechanisms were electrified.

The Organ

This instrument is a very fine one for a country parish church, and stands in the north chapel. Its predecessor was installed here in 1865. It was built by Bevington and had a single manual, with five speaking stops, also a small pedal-board, with one 16' stop.

The present instrument was purchased in 1936, thanks to the enterprise of the Revd B.T. Pitts. It was originally built by 'Father' Henry Willis, in 1865, for the Chapel Royal of the Savoy. It comprises two manuals and pedals and the specification as follows:-

Swell Organ		Great Organ	
Cornopean	8'	Trumpet	8'
Mixture	III	Corno di Bassetto	8'
Piccolo	2'	Flute Harmonique	4'
Principal	4'	Fifteenth	2'
Stopped Diapason	8'	Twelfth	2'
Gamba	8'	Principal	4'
Open Diapason	8'	Claribel Flute	8'
Swell to Great		Dulciana	8'
Swell to Pedal		Open Diapason	8'
Great to Pedal		Double Open Diapason	16'

In addition, there stops for Swell to Great, Swell to Pedal and Great to Pedal; four composition pedals to Great; a lever Swell pedal.

The modern case on the west side was designed and made by Mr Ralph Bootman, in 1963.

List of Vicars

Canon Raven's work of 1912 reveals that between 1291 and 1420 there were usually two Rectors at one time, appointed by different patrons; either, or both, in the manner of the times, might have been absentees! But in 1420 the appointment of both rectors came into the hands of the Dean and Chapter of St. Mary in the Fields, Norwich, and from that time one vicar only was appointed for Fressingfield. Eventually the patronage of the living passed to Emmanuel College, Cambridge, of which Archbishop Sancroft had been Master from 1662 until his appointment as Dean of St. Paul's in 1664. From 1681 to 1968 vicars of Fressingfield were also vicars of Withersdale.

1421	Will Papilton	1727	Thomas Whittaker
1429	Johannes Estker	1739	Gervas Holmes
1434	Nicholas Bret	1776	Edward Vaughan
1464	Radue Pulvertoft	1797	Sir Henry Pix Heyman, Bart.
1492	Willus Ketwood	1808	Thomas Allsopp
1497	Joyce Smythe (presumably male!)	1845	William Colbeck
1512	Will Wyght	1885	John James Raven, Canon
1535	Joh Walsingham	1906	William Roland Raven-Hart
1554	Joh Sympson (Staynthorpe)	1920	Kenneth Edwin Shaw
1561	Thomas Ockley (Ocle)	1929	Samuel Goldsmith, Canon
1567	John Cooper	1936	Bernard Thursby Pitts
1590	William Hall	1969	Humphrey Paine 2
1595	John Rawlins	1974	Tom Pownall, 3 Canon
1629	James Fale 1	1986	Roger Smith 4
1678	John Shepheard	1992	Geoff Wood 5
1723	James Fletcher	2000	David Finch

- 1 During the period of the Commonwealth James Fale was ejected from the living, being imprisoned for part of this time in Ipswich, and returning in 1661.
- 2 Vicar also of Weybread
- 3 Vicar also of Weybread and Wingfield from 1979
- 4 Vicar also of Mendham, Metfield, Weybread and Withersdale from 1989 (present benefice)
- 5 Interregnum - during the year of 1991 -1992 there was no vicar of the benefice.

Postscript

The Living Church Today

“I will build my church”: these are not the words of some wealthy landowner in the fourteenth century, nor of an aspiring architect in the fifteenth, but of the Head of the Church itself, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (see St. Matthew’s Gospel chapter 16, verse 18). And through the centuries, wherever the Gospel, the good news, of his saving love has been made known, he has called out men and women to belong to him and to belong together in the fellowship of his Church.

Praise God, this is still happening in Fressingfield. Our lovely parish church, so full of architectural and historic interest is not just a showpiece or a museum, but rather it is the meeting place of one little part of the world-wide company of Christian believers. Week by week young and old gather to sing God’s praises, to learn more about him, and to bring to him in prayer their own needs and the needs of others near and far. As the church building, by its noble design and commanding position, dominates the village scene, bearing witness to the greatness of our God, so the church members endeavour with his help to bear witness in the local community to his laws and to his love and power.

Tom Pownall