



# FOST news

Friends of St Thomas' Church Northlew

## Happy New Year!

Wishing you all a very happy and healthy new year. Highlights of 2024 for FOST include the restoration and return of the Henry Willis organ and the open day for Devon Historic Churches Trust. Remember the carved Tudor bench ends?

## Church history guides

Visitors can now learn more about the church and its history using the laminated guides available near the Welcome desk. The guides are based on the *Spotlight on...* articles originally published in FOST news throughout 2024.

Others will be added in due course, but topics so far include:

- An introduction to the church
- The Henry Willis organ
- The Norman font
- The porch
- The Pellew window
- The Rutleigh Chapel
- The tower

And coming soon - an *illustrated guide for visitors* will be on sale in the church from early 2025.

## Net Zero 2030

Back in 2020 the General Synod acknowledged the global climate emergency and voted for the whole of the Church of England to achieve carbon net zero by 2030.

This commitment applies to us at a local level too, especially as grant making bodies are starting to link their funding for repairs and energy saving projects to progress made in minimising the church's carbon footprint.

The first step is to undertake a detailed Energy Audit of the church, churchyard and Church Room to assess the current situation. An interesting project for early 2025.

## Attention all artists!

FOST is organising an *art and photography exhibition* in May to showcase local talent. If you would like to display and/or sell some of your work to support FOST (or be involved) then please do contact us. Further details to follow as our plans develop.

## Supporting FOST

FOST news is an occasional newsletter with information about our church building and fund raising events. If you would prefer an electronic copy, just let us have your email address.

You can support the Friends' work by taking part in fund raising events but if you would like to get more actively involved and/or become a member, please contact Jackie Ellis [jackie.ann.ellis@btinternet.com](mailto:jackie.ann.ellis@btinternet.com) 01837 658750 .

Secure donations can be made using our QR code - and you can Gift Aid your contribution at the same time.



FOST is a Registered Charity  
No 1070123

## FOST finds



Looking forward to Spring - but where are they?

## Coming up

**Sunday 5 January**  
09:30 Morning Prayer

**Sunday 12 January**  
09:00 Breakfast and Plough Sunday Service celebrating farmers and farming at the beginning of the year

**Sunday 19 January**  
09:30 Morning Prayer

**Saturday 25 January**  
Burns' Night in the Church Room - haggis, tartan and all

**Sunday 26 January**  
09:30 Morning Prayer

**Sundays 2/9/16 February**  
09:30 Morning Prayer

**Sunday 23 February**  
09:30 Morning Prayer  
Steak pie lunch Victory Hall

## FOST facts

Like many others, our clock face uses IIII rather than Roman numerals IV for four o'clock. Some say it gives better visual balance with the VIII on the other side, others that it avoids confusion with VI which is rather close by (and upside down).

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## Spotlight on...

The *west tower* is Norman, made of rubblestone - rough, unsquared local stone laid in irregular courses. It has three stages. The bottom houses the ringing chamber and the west door.

The middle section contains the clock mechanism while the top section is the belfry with square headed slatted openings. The upper half of the tower may have been rebuilt in the 15th century and the parapets and pinnacles added - the stonework on the top half of the middle section is different from the bottom half.

Thomas England, Rector in the mid 1800s, reported that the tower was cut off from the rest of the church by wainscoting and he had to climb through a small door and over four or five feet of earth covering the floor to ring the bell. Apparently the ringers maintained that the tower was separate from the main church and the belfry belonged to them.



### The west doorway

According to *Devon Churchland*\* the 12th century entrance is quite posh for such a rural place, but so little Norman work survives in Devon that there's not enough to compare it with. Why? Because nearly every church was rebuilt or renovated in the Great Rebuilding of 15th & 16th Centuries.

The doorway has a pointed arch with a double head and one order of (modern) colonettes. There have been some repairs to the stonework, with only the left capital original.

The curved outer door hinges are rather special. And meanwhile, repairs to the door frame are imminent...



In the past, *the top of tower* has been home to a flag pole and a radio mast. Now it's just the lightning conductors and weather vane.

*View from the top looking west towards the Square*

### The windows

There are two Norman round-headed stair lights on the south wall of the tower and one on the north. The view from inside the ringing chamber shows the walls are five feet thick - that's about three cubits in old money.



### The floor

The rare Barnstaple glazed and embossed clay tiles in the bell ringing chamber are from the 15th/16th Century. The central tiles are well worn by the feet of bell ringers, but some closer to the walls have survived and you can make out designs similar to those on the bench ends, installed about the same time.



Above: A pelican (?) next to a fleur-de-lys

Left: A Tudor rose

### The clock face

The church clock was installed in 1897 for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. On the west side - helpfully facing the village - the clock face reads *Pereunt et imputantur* meaning *They perish and are imputed*. It refers to the hours that pass by and are set down against us if we waste them. There is a similar inscription on the Astronomical Clock in Exeter Cathedral.



Appropriately near the clock, a carved *slate memorial stone* commemorates Mary King who died in 1783, aged 23.

*Death with his dart did pierce my heart  
When I was in my Prime  
Weep not for me dear friends forbear  
Twas God's Appointed Time*



\* *Devon Churchland* <https://devonchurchland.co.uk>