

FELIXSTOWE TOWN COUNCIL

Mayor's Badge and Chain of Office.

1. The Badge was presented by Councillor A. W. Phillips, Chairman 1926/27.
2. The original Chain was presented by Captain A. E. Smith in November, 1955.
3. This Chain was added to and refurbished in memory of C. J. Andrews, who served on the Felixstowe Urban District Council for 31 years and was Chairman 1935/36.
4. The Royal Air Force Badge was presented on the closing of the Royal Air Force Station, Felixstowe, in June 1962 by the past and present Officers and Other Ranks of Royal Air Force, Felixstowe.

Felixstowe Urban District Council.

Extract from Civic Heraldry of England & Wales.

by C. Wilfrid Scott-Giles, M.A.

Felixstowe (Suffolk).

The U.D.C. has not obtained arms, but makes use of a shield parted chevronwise and the chief palewise; the first compartment is gold with a red cross, for Roger Bigod, Earl of Norfolk; the second contains the arms of the See of Rochester, Silver with a red saltire charged with gold scallop shell; and the base is-barry wavy of six pieces silver and blue, with an episcopal mitre. In some representations, a mural crown is placed above the shield, and a mace and sword behind it.

I am indebted to the Clerk of the Council for the following note:

In White's Suffolk there is the following passage: 'It is said to have been called Felixstowe from Felix the Burgundian who converted the East Anglians to Christianity and became the first Bishop of Dunwich in 630. It has been conjectured that this Saint landed and for some time resided here on his arrival in this country, but the place was no doubt part of the parish of Walton and did not receive its present name till a Priory of Black Monks dedicated to St. Felix was founded here by Roger Bigod, Earl of Norfolk, who gave it as a cell to the Priory at Rochester about A.D. 1150. He endowed it with the lands taken out of his Manor of Walton which form the Manor of Felixstowe Priory'.

Chairs -
Fenestras

As we know Felixstowe in 1979 it may well be thought that it is a modern Town brought about by the development of the Docks during the past decade. It is undoubtedly true that there has been a large increase in population during recent years for what, but a few years ago, where cornfields is now covered with houses.

Felixstowe however has a very ancient history dating back over many centuries and at low tide one can see off our shores the remains of a Fort built by the Roman Emperor Constantine during the Roman occupation of our land and which years later was demolished by the Normans leaving the remains to the fury of the seas which, over the years, have eroded the coast line of East Anglia.

It is claimed that the site of the parish church in Old Felixstowe is the site of a church built by Felix - the Burgandian Monk - who brought Christianity to England in the seventh century and who became the first Bishop of East Anglia in Dunwich. It might well be that it was here on our shore that he first set foot in England - the name of our Town certainly implies that this could be so bearing in mind that the word 'stow' means 'place'.

Much of the history of East Anglia must be a matter for conjecture but some facts can be gleaned from such old records that do exist amplified by the writings of historians through the ages whose researches were compiled on stories handed down from generation to generation which never appeared in any official records.

In the British Museum is an ancient map compiled by a Monk of St. Albans which depicts the eastern part of England and clearly delineates the place we know as Felixstowe. Set out on this map is a rectangle with the words 'Angulus Anglie' which translated means 'corner of England'.

It may well be that the occupation of East Anglia by the Romans left us with a wonderful legacy for the Romans knew the need for making the best use of the land and the development of agriculture from those early days has made East Anglia the most famous corn growing area in our Island.

Following the invasion of England by the Normans our history became more closely linked with the peoples across the Channel and superseded the previous influence the Scandinavians had over our affairs.

The Normans introduced into England their system of land tenure and in the Domesday Book which was then compiled this 'corner of England' is shown as plot No. 117 and the land was allocated to those persons who had been loyal to William the Conqueror. These grants of land were, in the main, a reward for military services rendered.

Large parcels of land in East Anglia were granted to a Roger Bigod and whilst local places like Walton and Falkenham can be identified from these old records Felixstowe is not specifically named until permission was granted to build a Priory on a piece of land in Walton, on meadow land at the rear of Walton Church, which then became known as the manor of Felixstowe Priory.

Roger Bigod, the first owner of these lands, died in 1107 and was succeeded by his Son William - who was lost at sea in 1120 - and who was succeeded by his brother Hugh. Hugh Bigod was later created the first Earl of Norfolk. He also was appointed Earl Marshal of England.

Although the Dukedom of Norfolk was not created until the year 1483 the family have always been the premier Dukes and Earls of England.

It was the last Earl of Norfolk, who died without issue in 1306, who built Walton Hall the remains of which can still be seen in a part of the Town's Cricket Ground.

Over the years various treasures have been excavated from the land in Felixstowe which clearly confirms that the Romans once occupied the area. One most important thing found is a Vase - now kept in the British Museum - whilst several coins of that age and pieces of articles of daily use have been unearthed in various parts of the Town.

When the Normans came they built several castles in East Anglia and at one time there was a castle at Walton but this appears to have been demolished after Henry 11 built a castle at Orford.

Thus from being just a small mark on an ancient map at a point lying within a short distance from where three rivers flow into the sea there now stands this Town, now so renowned for its port facilities.

What is its history of the past and very much earlier years.

There is no doubt that long ago it was an easy place for invaders to land on our shores and when they left and returned to their homeland only a small community remained. As such it probably continued as a fishing village for it is well known that the sea and ships have always been closely linked with this place once only a dot on a map.

History books tell us that when Edward 111 ventured out on his expedition to France in 1339 - an expedition which reminds us of such historic names as Crecy, Poitiers and Calais - his fleet of ships was anchored in the Deben and among them were ships from the Kings Fleet (a name well known and perpetuate in Felixstowe) without doubt manned by local men. History also tells us that the King, who had stayed at the Old Hall at Walton, crossed the bay from Felixstowe to Shotley to receive from the Archbishop of Canterbury a blessing on the adventurous expedition to be undertaken.

Two hundred and fifty years later, when the ships of the Spanish Armada had been driven by the wind up the Channel into the North Sea, it was the ships lying in the Deben which left their anchorage and drove the Spanish away from our shores.

The East coast has always been vulnerable in so far as invaders of our shores was concerned and, no doubt, smugglers, and about 1626 a fort was built at Landguard to protect the entrances to the rivers Orwell and Stour. It was from this fort that an attempted landing by the Dutch in 1677 was repulsed by the garrison stationed at the fort.

Subsequently a new fort was built and in 1875 further rebuilding of the fort was completed.

At the time of the Napoleonic Wars further strengthening of our defences was necessary and a series of Martello towers were built along the Felixstowe coast line - due to demolition of some and to the ravages of the sea on some which remained - few of these now remain.

In more recent years Felixstowe achieved some renown following the building of the air station (now enveloped within the docks complex) in 1913 when the development of aircraft as a means of defence became necessary.

The air protection of our Country during the first World War was the responsibility of the Royal Navy and the Army each with their own air arm, i.e. The Royal Naval Air Service and the Royal Flying Corps. The latter was at first a unit of the Royal Engineers.

It was not until April 1918 that these two services were combined and became the Royal Air Force.

The air station at Felixstowe became a base for flying boats which during the first World War were used for anti submarine patrols operating over the North Sea. Perhaps however the greatest distinction Felixstowe can claim about this air station, in times of peace, it was a team based at this station which secured for our Country the much coveted Schneider Trophy on three occasions between the years 1927 and 1931.

The development of the docks has absorbed most of the area surrounding the old fort at Landguard and has thus brought to an end the use of the area for military purposes. As a result the very delightful Officers Mess at Normandy Barracks now serves a very different role having been converted into offices for Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

The old fort however remains outside the dock area and is badly in need of restoration if it is not to become yet another ruin of our past history.

Another fort - Brackenbury - was built in Felixstowe during the first World War but this proved to be an unfortunate defence investment. It was never really capable of meeting the purpose for which it was built due to the unsuitability of the ground on which it was constructed. However it served a purpose by reason of the fact that it deluded our enemies.

During the second World War Felixstowe became renowned for the little ships which, operating from their base in the much smaller docks which existed at that time, rescued so many airmen who had been forced to come down in the North Sea.

Felixstowe can claim another distinction for it was here that East Anglia had its first Golf Club - one of the first half dozen or so in England. The Martello tower, which is in the middle of the course, being the first Club House.

It will therefore be appreciated that, over so many years, Felixstowe has been so closely linked with the Church, the Sea and, more recently the Air.

All this past history leads up to the Town's Civic Regalia described by the Rev. David Edwards - a student of heraldry - when giving an address at an Annual Civic Service, as extraordinarily good and better than any other of which he was aware depicting the history of a Town.

The silver gilt Chain of Office has inscribed upon it the names of all those who have served as Chairman of the Urban District Council since it was formed in 1895 and also the names of those, who since Local Government Reorganisation in 1974, have served the Town as Mayor.

The centre piece of the chain is unique comprising a gold and enamel badge of the Royal Air Force which was presented to the Town by the Officers and Other Ranks, at the time of closing down the Royal Air Force station, to mark the long association of the Royal Air Force with the Town. This is a distinction which few other Towns have had bestowed upon them.

Suspended from the Chain of Office is a shield containing the Town's Coat of Arms with a mural Crown above it and a sword and mace behind it. A scroll surrounding the bottom half of the shield bears the word 'Felixstowe'.

The shield consists of three compartments divided chevronwise, the first part is red with a cross being the arms of Roger Bigod, the first Earl of Suffolk, the second part, silver with a red saltire charged with a scallop shell, being the arms of the See of Rochester, whilst the third consists of six wavy lines in silver and blue, with an episcopal mitre.

Unfortunately the coat of arms is not registered at the College of Heralds.

It will thus be seen that the shield reminds us that Roger Bigod gave the land upon which the Priory was built so many years ago, that money to support the Priory came from the See of Rochester of which the Priory was a cell, whilst the Mitre reminds us of that St. Felix, the first Bishop of East Anglia, landed on our shores and brought Christianity to our people.

