

HUNGATE STAINED GLASS TRAILS: NO. 10

Stratton Strawless • Cawston • Salle



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**STRATTON STRAWLESS, ST MARGARET.
NR10 5LN. TG 222 207. Normally open.**

The west tower is somewhat squat and looks as if a further stage had been planned but the money ran out. The effect is solid and unpretentious.

The interior is totally at odds with this impression. Doorways at an angle to the church's lines lead from what is almost a narthex (a vestibule at the entrance) into the nave, and between them is a modest font with, for him, a modest font cover by Comper. Along the south arcade a gothic screen separates the nave from an aisle, which is in effect the Marsham family mausoleum. Straight ahead is a huge candelabrum and above is a very fine roof, the timbers having the faded colour of old wood.

Observant visitors will have spotted the first gothic note in a cottage as they turned off the A140 and there is more to be found in the gallery, reached by a vertiginous stair. From it one gets a close-up view of the superb roof, the wise men whose heads support it and a bird's eye view of the chandelier.

There are two large Marsham monuments in the south aisle, both worth close study. There are many other less exuberant family memorials, and the plain table tomb outside the south door commemorates one of its most distinguished members. Robert Marsham FRS was an 18th-century expert on trees and many other aspects of the natural world around him. His records of the first intimations of spring – and the temperature changes which accelerated or slowed them – was maintained by the family till 1958. He was a friend of Gilbert White of Selborne and a pioneer planter of trees in the heathland around his hall and church. The demand for timber in two world wars means that little remains of what he did, except an immense cedar. He deserves credit as an early ecologist.

There is a late 13th-century recumbent monument to a nameless woman beside the lectern and, across the road where one may park, an ensemble of farm buildings in mellowed brick, patrolled by hens or, if you are lucky, geese. If you are very lucky there will be crab apple jelly for sale in the church.

The Glass

In 1473 John Marsham left money in his will for the glazing of a north window. Two of the north windows retain medieval glazing in the tracery – one of these might be the window paid for by Marsham but we cannot be sure which. Antiquarian literature describes what must have been the main-light panels, including figures of the donor and his wife, Ss Catherine and Margaret and the Coronation of the Virgin. These sacred subjects, plus the Annunciation, appear in this order in the more westerly window, but in the tracery, so we cannot be sure if it is Marsham's window.

*“Two of the north windows retain
medieval glazing”*

The other window contains the four Evangelists in the tracery, portrayed as seated and winged, with their symbols. Luke is shown in his legendary role as an artist (painters and glaziers belonged to S Luke's Guild in Norwich). These figures were probably painted by the 15th-century Dutch glass painter based in Norwich, William Mundeford, who did some of the glass now at Mulbarton. Each of the two windows has its own type of canopy tops in the heads of the main lights.

Other windows have some interesting fragments, including a fine youthful head from a main-light figure of 15th-century Norwich work, the head of a bishop, and some foreign pieces.

**CAWSTON, ST AGNES. NR10 4AG.
TG134 238. Normally open.**

Like its neighbour Salle, this is a very grand church, built of expensive imported stone. The superb tower has no parapet, but no expense was spared in the detailing of its west window and the doorway below with its carving of a wild man facing a dragon. Michael de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk, who died in 1414, paid for the rebuilding of the tower and much more. The chancel and south transept were there before his work began.

Inside, it is the height of the building that is particularly impressive, crowned by perhaps the finest hammerbeam roof in the county, its rows of angels with their wings outspread. At the west end is a 15th-century ringers' gallery. Its inscription "God sped the plow..." is picked up by an actual plough and the sign of the Plough Inn.

The screen at the other end of the nave is unusually tall, with doors, also unusual, and delicate tracery. The twenty panels, less harshly treated than most by the reformers, are by a number of hands, two of which show strong Flemish influence. S Matthew wears spectacles. There are wall-paintings, the one in the south transept probably of S Agnes, bosses, carvings on pews, a fine pulpit – altogether a wonderful church to explore with care and time.

In the village are pretty houses and at Eastgate, a short distance east, the Ratcatchers will welcome you. Across the fields to the south is Booton S Michael and All Angels (TG 124 224, normally open). This is an extravaganza built by the rector from 1849 to 1900, the learned and devoted Whitwell Elwin. After Salle and Cawston's austerity it comes as a culture shock, especially the angel musicians and saints in the big nave windows and the angels in the roof above them. Look back across the fields to Cawston and Salle, both in sight, to recover.

The Glass

Apart from a few fragments in some of the tracery lights, the old glass here is in a south aisle window, arranged in 1936 by G. King & Son in three panels easily visible. The many fragments repair close study. They date from c.1420-30 and from c.1450-60 and were recovered from the parsonage.

*"Note also a beautiful head
of Christ in the centre"*

The earlier fragments have mostly turned rather dark because of corrosion, but their soft painting style is expressive and masterly. In the first light are two feathered angels playing pig-snout psalteries, as they are rather unflatteringly called. Note also a beautiful head of Christ in the centre, part of a richly-dressed man and the name 'Blida' on a scroll; she was the mother of the local S Walstan. In the middle panel are further musical angels; at the top, playing a gittern and at the bottom, two with a lute.

Other fragments of men in fur-edge tunics are seen and in the centre a dove representing the Holy Spirit and two Lambs symbolic of Jesus. The angel at the top of the third light plays a large harp; one next to it and that at the bottom, a psaltery. Lutes and harps are also seen. There are some fine heads and a hand holding an upright vessel of some kind, perhaps one of the Wise Virgins.

MAP OF THE TRAIL

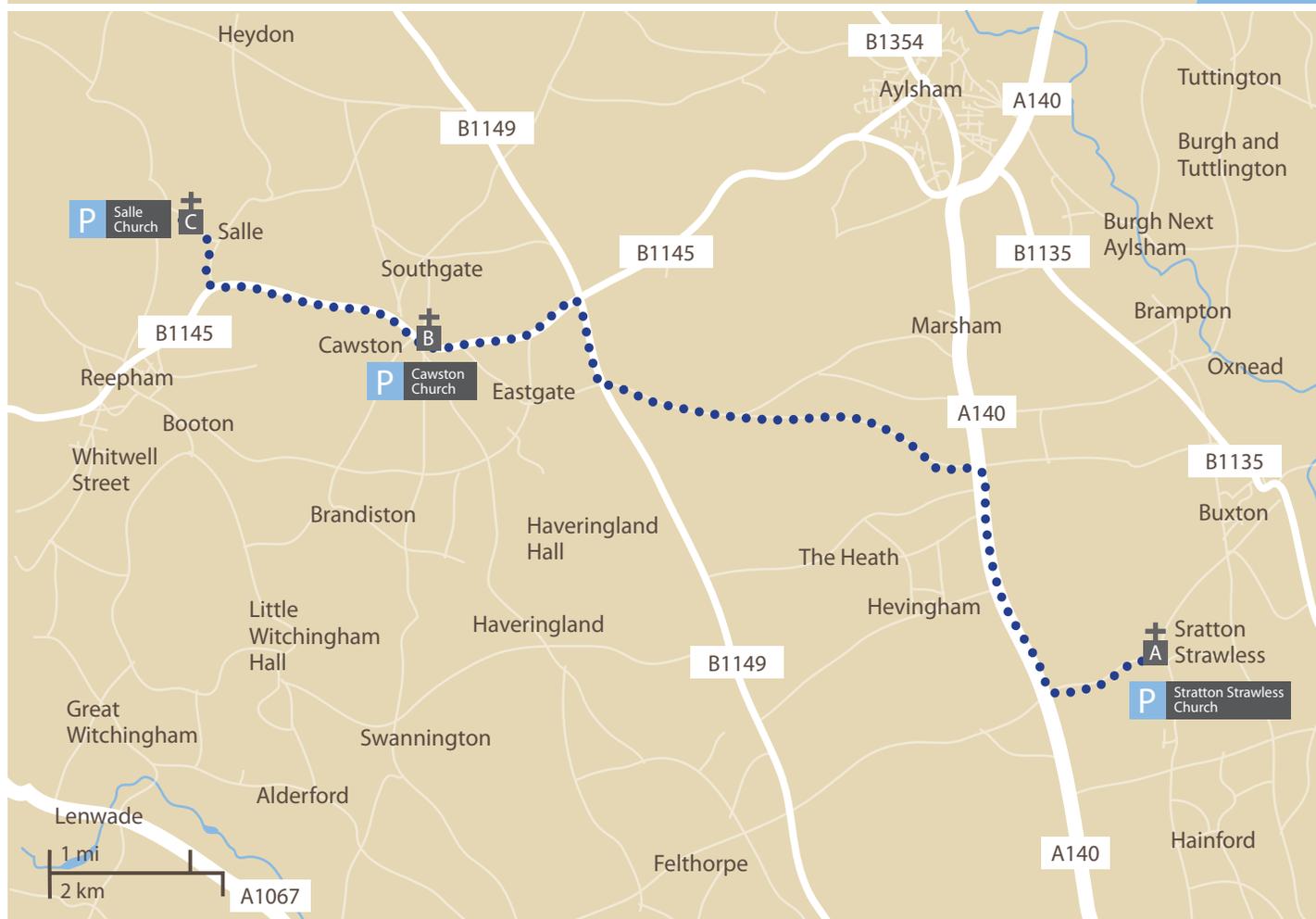
Please note these maps are to be used as a guide.
We suggest you use the postcode or co-ordinates on
the information pages for more detailed directions.

Key

Trail Route 

Church 

Parking 



**SALLE, ST PETER & ST PAUL. NR10 4SE.
TG 110 248. Normally open.**

For many people this is their favourite Norfolk church, this side of the Fens anyway.

Built probably within a twenty-year span in the first half of the 15th century, it has the impact that churches largely of one build customarily do, but here it is the size of the building and its proportions that amaze. The quality of the workmanship adds to the impact and so does the unencumbered, calm interior. This remarkable church reflects the wealth to be made from the wool trade in late medieval Norfolk, but we know, too, that its rectors had influential connections at the royal court. Like S Peter Hungate, this was one of Prince Frederick Duleep Singh's rescues, this time not from demolition but rather from a vicar's over-enthusiastic restoration.

As a result there are delights wherever you look: the bosses and doors in both porches and the font with its cover and pulley that seem to go on for ever when first seen. The roofs deserve separate scrutiny: faded colours in the nave, panelled in the transept, and in the chancel angels with carvings depicting the life of Christ down the centre. Below them the stalls have misericords and carvings of animals and human heads. There are brasses in the floor, a three-decker pulpit and, on each side of the crossing, locally written Commandment boards, Lord's Prayer and Creed.

Perhaps best of all is what one sees first, entering the churchyard: angels in the spandrels on each side of the west door, dispensing incense that one can almost smell.

Opposite:
Stained glass at Salle church



The Glass

Here are the highly interesting remains of glass of several periods in the 15th century. The earliest are the remains of an Old Testament series in the south aisle. In the tracery of the westernmost window there are two figures of God the Father from the Creation of the World and a few scraps of inscription at the bottom from panels from scenes of Noah's ark and the Sacrifice of Isaac, all dateable to c.1411. The east window of the north aisle is a little later, c.1420-30. Only the tracery-light glazing survives, but it has been incorrectly restored, so that it now depicts the Annunciation, whereas it should be the Coronation of the Virgin. Probably the lily-pots in the side openings misled the restorer, as these are an emblem of the Annunciation.

“William Wode designed the glass to promote the interests of Henry VI”

The chancel was built in about 1440 and retains part of its contemporary glazing. The figures in the east window are what remain of a sumptuous series of the Nine Orders of Angels, here represented in pairs, with no sparing of expensive coloured glass. The Orders seen are Archangels, standing on a building (the head does not belong); Principalities, with kneeling kings; red demons (part of a depiction of the Fall of the Rebel Angels); and Powers, birching demons. The heraldry in this window (with recorded missing shields) is of some important people, Henry VI and the Dukes of Exeter and Suffolk, for example, and it would seem that the rector, William Wode, who may have worked for the Duke of Exeter, designed the glass to promote the interests of Henry VI, who fortunes were beginning to suffer in 1440.

The patriarchs, prophets and cardinals in the side windows originally stood over kings, popes and archbishops of Canterbury, the choice of figures giving further support to the king.

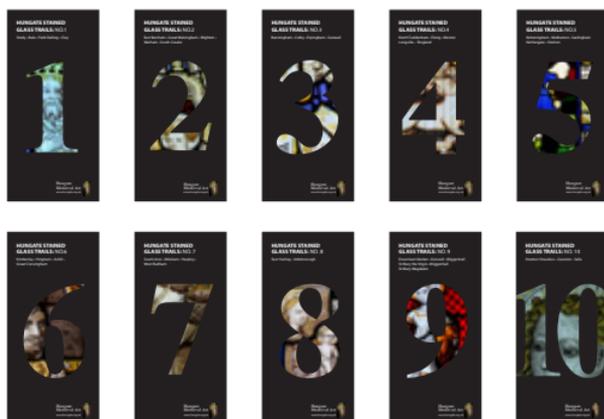
The transepts were added later. In the north transept the east window has remains in the tracery of the Visitation (very restored) with its Old Testament parallel, the Meeting of Justice and Peace and Truth and Mercy; it is dated to 1441. The glass in the east window of the south transept was reused from an earlier window there of c.1444 made by Thomas Briggs.

We see Thomas with his two wives Margaret, S Thomas Becket and the Annunciation and Coronation of the Virgin. In the south-east chancel window are Ss Margaret and Catherine, which also belong here. Thomas' son John remodelled the transept in about 1470, reusing the glass which depicted his parents, but providing new, now lost heraldry below and glazing the south window with new glass. A few saints and angels can still be seen.



In spite of its deep, rich colours, beautiful draftsmanship and fascinating imagery, stained glass is one of the most under-rated artistic legacies of the medieval period. A distinctive style and quality of craftsmanship has led to stained glass made by Norwich workshops being displayed in museum collections across the world but, largely unknown to visitors, medieval glass remains in over 200 of the county's parish churches. This series aims to draw attention to some of these medieval treasures and encourage visitors to explore the beautiful churches where these windows are to be found.

Collect the complete series:



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Opening hours

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