

# HUNGATE STAINED GLASS TRAILS: NO. 7

Mileham • South Acre • Harpley •  
West Rudham



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**MILEHAM, ST JOHN THE BAPTIST. PE32 2RD.  
TF 922 196. For the key ring 01328 701249.**

Externally, the walls have a mix of textures including much old render, possibly original. The priest's door on the south side of the chancel is 12th century, the aisles 13th and the tower, with its seated figures at the corners and its gargoyles, 14th.

The porch in the tower base has an old door and a ladder, creating a blend of soft colours. Just through the door is a medieval coffin lid (another is opposite by the south door). The north aisle was made by cutting through the previous north wall. The openings are finished much more elegantly than is often the case in rural churches. The south aisle has a more conventional arcade whose pronounced lean has been stabilised with clever and unobtrusive 20th century engineering. Both original aisle roofs survive, the delicate carving on the south side looking its best when the sun is low. The aisle's east window tracery and the mouldings round the other windows suggest a more than usually skilful mason. Note the lamps.

There are box pews, a 15th-century pulpit and font, a 1639 poor box, decorative if damaged niches in the east wall and a number of memorials in the floor and on the chancel wall which deserve to be read, including those to cousins of Samuel Pepys.



Above:  
Stained glass at Mileham church

### **The Glass**

The west window gives the best impression we can have in Norfolk of what a typical complete mid-14th-century window would have looked like – in the main lights, large single figures of saints surrounded by tall, elaborate canopies, and beneath, a horizontal band of quarry glazing relieved by roundels containing heraldry (Elsing), grotesques (Ringland), or, as here, sacred monograms. The emphasis of the design is on strong vertical and horizontal accents, and the colouring of the period, although richer than much 15th-century work, stresses the intermediate tones of yellow, brown and green, without the predominance of primary colours seen both in the preceding and succeeding centuries. Note how the curvilinear forms of the 14th-century tracery leave little room for figured glazing, and decorative work with foliage is used instead, apart from a head of God the Father at the top.

The three main-light figures are John the Baptist in the central light, to whom the church is dedicated, flanked by S Catherine and S Margaret, often paired and very popular female saints. Other reset glass is in the east window of the south aisle. In the central light is a large mid-15th-century figure of S Agatha set on fragments including the hand of God at the top. She is flanked on the left by a figure of a sainted bishop and on the right by one of John the Evangelist, both mid-14th-century. Below her is a rather corroded roundel and a piece of inscription with 'broun'. This name was originally in the south chancel window with the fragments at the bottom of the outer lights depicting two pack horses and a man and a woman kneeling. The name was originally 'Thomas Broun' and was accompanied by the word 'peddar' and also in this window was a depiction of S Anne teaching the Virgin Mary to read. A Thomas Brown was an executor of a Mileham will in 1454; he was probably a pedlar by trade.

**SOUTH ACRE, ST GEORGE. PE32 2AD.  
TF 810 144. For the key ring 01760 755377.**

With its beautifully cared for churchyard, this mostly 14th-century church looks almost domestic. The south side, however, is all different textures, with old render and lovely tracery in the chancel window. More dignified is the west tower, early 15th century as is the porch.

Inside there are original roofs to the nave (a fine hammerbeam) and the aisle. The Norman font has a surprising late Gothic cover. In the tower base is a battered but still lovely screen, with painting on the back, and a steep ancient ladder. The nave benches have carved ends (the naturalistic ones in the chancel are 20th century).

*“Stand at the east end and look  
back at this remarkable church”*

At the east end of the long, low north aisle is a Harsyck brass – their family presumably paid for building and adorn the church. The recumbent figure of a Knight Templar, his legs unconvincingly crossed, is probably another. The badly decayed wooden effigy in the chancel may be a third, but this could be a relic of one of the figures on the rood. The large monument to Sir Edward Barkham and his wife (1623) is attributed, like that at East Barsham, to John and Matthew Christmas. A more recent association here is with Margaret Fountaine the naturalist, a 19th-century vicar’s daughter whose butterfly collection is in the Norwich Castle museum.

Stand at the east end and look back at this remarkable church.

**The Glass**

Fragments of three different dates can be seen here. The east window of the north aisle contains remains of late-13th-century *grisaille* glazing – the most complete example in the county of a type of window which was once very common and in which little or no coloured glass was used and the design was based on geometric forms and foliage patterns which became more naturalistic as the century progressed. Here, the leaf patterns on white glass are relieved with touches of blue, yellow and red.

The adjacent north window contains equally interesting remains. Blomefield tells us that Sir John Harsyk rebuilt the north aisle and ordered in his will, proved in 1383, that he be buried in the Chapel of the Assumption, which was at the east end of the north aisle, with a window in which were his own portrait with that of his wife. This must have been the north-east window of the aisle behind the grill leading to the chapel, which now contains in the tracery-lights a broken depiction of the Coronation of the Virgin, which scene was customarily placed over a scene of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary.

The three-dimensional canopy-tops in the heads of the lights indicate that a date around the time of Sir John’s death would suit this glass. The splendid brass to Sir John and his wife in this chapel completes a rare surviving example of what was common in the Middle Ages of a memorial consisting of a brass or stone monument combined with a window. The westernmost south nave window has a medley of 15th-century pieces, mainly eyelet-filling decorated with the *rose-en-soleil*.

## MAP OF THE TRAIL

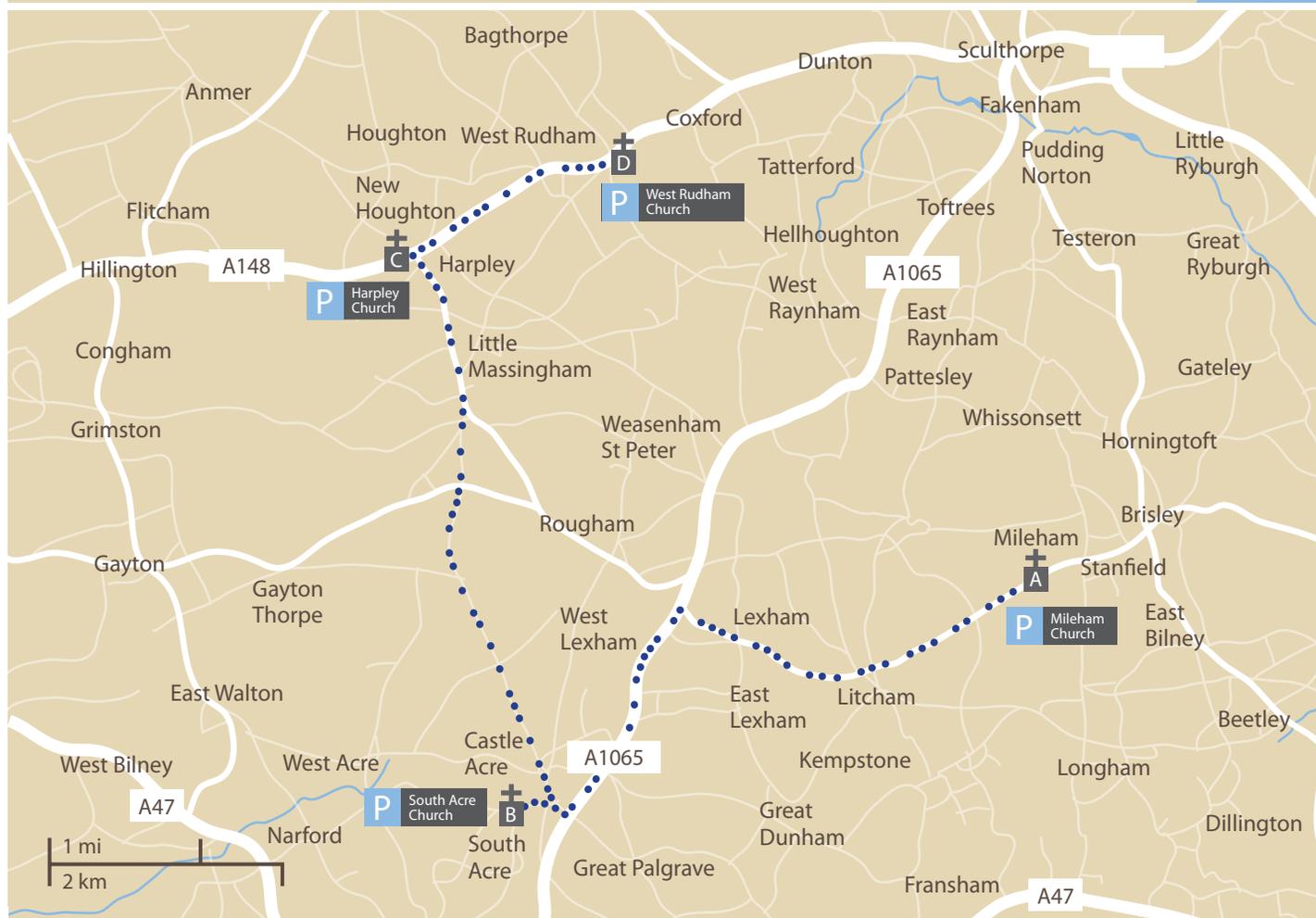
Please note these maps are to be used as a guide.  
We suggest you use the postcode or co-ordinates on the information pages for more detailed directions.

### Key

Trail Route 

Church 

Parking 



**HARPLEY, ST LAWRENCE. PE31 6TN.  
TF 787 261. Normally open.**

This is a stately church which gains from having been built mostly in two periods around 1300 and 1400, the work of each period having a coherence that other churches lack. It is in a far happier condition than when Simon Jenkins reported on it in the 1999 edition of 'England's Thousand Best Churches'.

The tower, of the first period, is unusual, being situated to the south of the building's main axis. One goes in through a fine 15th-century porch, but not before admiring the decorative parapet above the aisle, among the best in East Anglia, and the lion just to the east of the porch. The very special door is of the same date, carved all over with figures of angels, saints, doctors of the church and animals. An ogee wicket door lets one in and the whole door can be unbolted from the inside to enable wheel-chairs to enter.

The arcades date from the second period of work, as do the clerestory above and the roof with its rows of angels. It has now faded but, with binoculars, the original colour can still be seen. The angels are placed all down the centre as well as where you might expect them, appearing to hold all the timbers up. The screen is 15th-century, a fact concealed by the frightful 1865 repainting. There are many old benches, most of them with carved figures or animals on the bench-ends. Beyond is the chancel, of about 1300, with elaborate patterns of tracery in the windows, round the doors and on the seats for the clergy. In the middle of the floor is the grave of the man to whom we owe the earlier work, John de Gourney, patron of the living and rector from 1294 to 1332.

**The Glass**

Here binoculars are essential! The tracery of the lofty 15th-century west window has a dozen figures of saints, an Annunciation, a donor figure (very restored) and fragments of canopy work and quarry glazing. The central feature is the Annunciation, below which are seated figures of the English royal saints, Edmund and Edward the Confessor (based on cartoons of the Coronation of the Virgin) and flanked by standing figures of S James the Great (very like that at Rougham) and S John the Evangelist. The outer arch of the tracery has a series of ecclesiastical saints and a male donor at the top (the bearded head is a restoration) with the invocation *ora pro nobis*. The saints on the left in ascending order are: Wilfrid, archbishop; a deacon saint - possibly Lawrence, as the church bears his name, and two other deacon saints are present, including the next, Vincent; S Ledger, bishop. On the right, in descending order: Thomas of Canterbury, archbishop; Martin, bishop; Stephen, deacon; Blaise, bishop. Parts of a few figures are restored.

*"This is an interesting iconographic scheme, showing an individual choice of saints"*

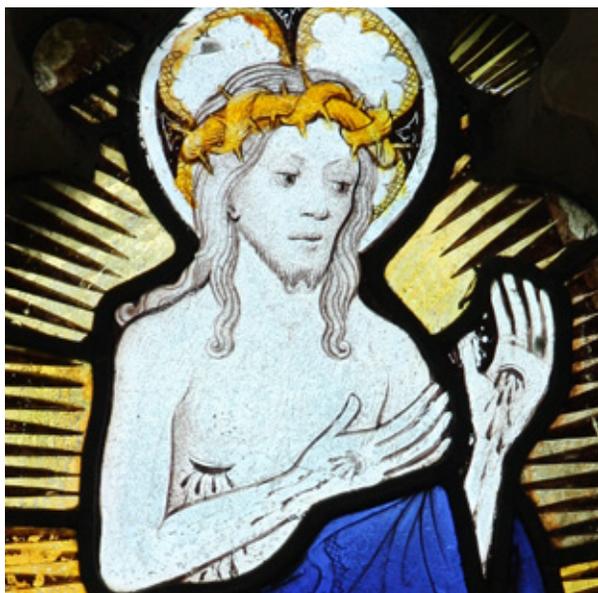
This is an interesting iconographic scheme, showing an individual choice of saints, as at Wiggshall S Mary Magdalen, where the litanies were used as a source and where the rather ugly facial style here can be paralleled. In the small openings below the transom is a series of the Orders of Angels, as at Oxburgh. The east window of the south aisle contains very restored canopy tops of the first half of the 14th century.

**WEST RUDHAM, ST PETER. PE31 8SU.  
TF 819 275. For the key ring 01485 528870.**

A handsome church that sits well in its large churchyard. The nave is 13th-century, the tower probably 14th and the chancel a 1456 rebuild, much restored in the 19th century.

Although it has no congregation and is therefore in the care of the Norfolk Churches Trust, S Peter's is lovingly looked after. A lesson it could teach to others is how well the old timbers of the nave roof blend with the limewash on the walls. The benches are 17th-century, with some older poppyheads incorporated. There are well-carved corbels and elegant colonettes and headmoulds surround the aisle windows. There is also a George IV royal arms.

The off-centre south door, south aisle west window and truncated westernmost arcade are a mystery – perhaps there was a change of plan towards the end of the 13th century?



**The Glass**

The three north nave windows have glass of about 1415-35. The western window has in the tracery a six-winged, feathered angel and a figure of Christ displaying his wounds, the latter one of the most beautiful in Norfolk glass. In the top tracery light of the central window is a figure of Christ wearing the Crown of Thorns; beneath is the Coronation of the Virgin flanked on the right by a figure of Gabriel from the Annunciation. In the head of the first main light is a canopy top.

The eastern window has a lily-pot in the top tracery light and a winged S Mark the Evangelist, holding a scroll bearing his name over a lion, his symbol. So the first two and last two lights of the bottom row of the tracery would have depicted the Four Evangelists and the middle two lights probably had another Annunciation.

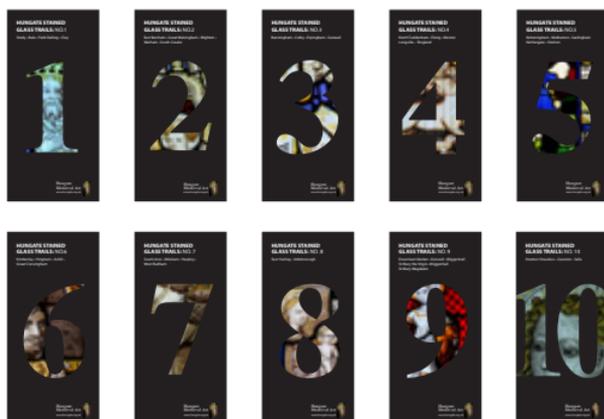
The centre and eastern windows are in an earlier style, with the large, soft eyes, small chins and large foreheads typical of the period 1415-25, whereas the glass in the western window is more linear in style and may be rather later. It is certainly by a different artists or workshop. Thus an east to west glazing campaign is discernible, as in the north aisle at Great Cressingham. The figure of S Mark is similar in design (but not identical) to that at Wiveton.

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Opposite:  
Stained glass at West Rudham church

**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.**

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