

# HUNGATE STAINED GLASS TRAILS: NO. 9

Outwell • Downham Market • Wiggenhall St  
Mary Magdalen • Wiggenhall St Mary the Virgin



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**OUTWELL, ST CLEMENT. PE14 8RQ.  
TF 514 036. Key from Post Office.**

An unusually broad church, with huge windows and a building history from the 13th to the 16th century. The effect is less light than it might be in the fens because of the orange glass in the main lights of the east window.

Inside and out the carving in stone and wood is exceptional – terrifying gargoyles and, on the north side of the south-east chapel, an extraordinary frieze on the wall-plate. Unusual poor box in the south-west corner.

**The Glass**

Three windows at the east end of the church have medieval glass, much of which is unusual and attractive. The earliest is in the tracery of the east chancel window, where there are fragments mainly of c.1420-1440 but also of the early 16th century and from the Fincham chapel, including a finch from a rebus or pun on the family name.

The most interesting glass, however, is of 16th-century date and is to be found in the second north window in the Fincham (S Nicholas) Chapel and in the east window of the south aisle in the Beaupré or Lady Chapel. In the Lynn Chapel in the north transept, donor figures and a date of 1420 were recorded in the windows by antiquarians. In the Fincham chapel, second north window from the east, there was a depiction of the three Magi or Kings who visited the baby Jesus. Balthazar, traditionally represented in the 16th century as a coloured man, still survives, again with Fincham heraldry above, matching that carved in the stonework.

In the Beaupré chapel on the south side, substantial remains of the tracery glazing of the east window survive, but somewhat rearranged. At the top is a

splendid bearded figure of God the Father, which aroused the ire of Protestant antiquarians, now placed next to S Faith. To either side are the shields of the Blessed Sacrament (with a chalice) and of the Five Wounds. The rest of the tracery lights contain a series of male and female saints, some, such as S Walstan, with a scythe and sceptre, and S Martina, with a bare breast and two pronged fork, very rare, plus fragments including a hand holding a golden cup from the Three Kings window in the Fincham Chapel.

Upwell (Key from post office. Handy pub next door), just down the road, is one of Fenland's hidden miracles: gargoyles (again), remarkable gravestones, eagle lectern, two sets of royal arms, wonderful angels in the roof. You'll never get closer to an angel than in the north gallery here and have a look at the carving at its east end – cautiously if you tend to have nightmares.



**DOWNHAM MARKET, ST EDMUND. PE38 9LF.  
TF 613 034. Key from vicarage.**

A beautiful site, looking over the roofs to the fen beyond, to whose fertility Downham owed its market. Basically medieval, S Edmund's was vigorously restored in the 19th century, but the angels in the roof tell us that much has survived. The glass you will want to take time over is in the west window. There is a rare Queen Anne royal arms, currently in a gallery of the same date, reached by an unusual stair. The glass chandelier must surely once have been domestic. Three pleasant monuments commemorate 18th-century grocers and an apothecary, where elsewhere there would have been landed gentry.

*"There is a rare Queen Anne royal arms  
reached by an unusual stair"*

If time allows, have a look at The Crown, with its fine stair and Assembly Room. If coming from Swaffham, do not miss Barton Bendish (especially S Mary's and the Spread Eagle), Fincham and Stradsett with its German east window.

**The Glass**

What you see is a collection of fragments arranged in the early 19th century and given red borders. The glass is of several different styles and dates and may have come from other churches as well as this one.

The most interesting panel is bottom left, where a figure of S Barnabas of about 1300 stands holding a scroll with his name. He was sometimes chosen to be the twelfth Apostle after the betrayal of Judas. Two similar figures of Ss Matthew and Thomas are in the Jesus Chapel in Norwich Cathedral, all three from the same set. Next to the Apostle stands a Seraph on a wheel and above are two other 'angels', confected from fragments of several figures. That on the left holds a palm, normally the attribute of a saint, such as S John, and on one wing is the head of a devil! That on the right plays a harp.

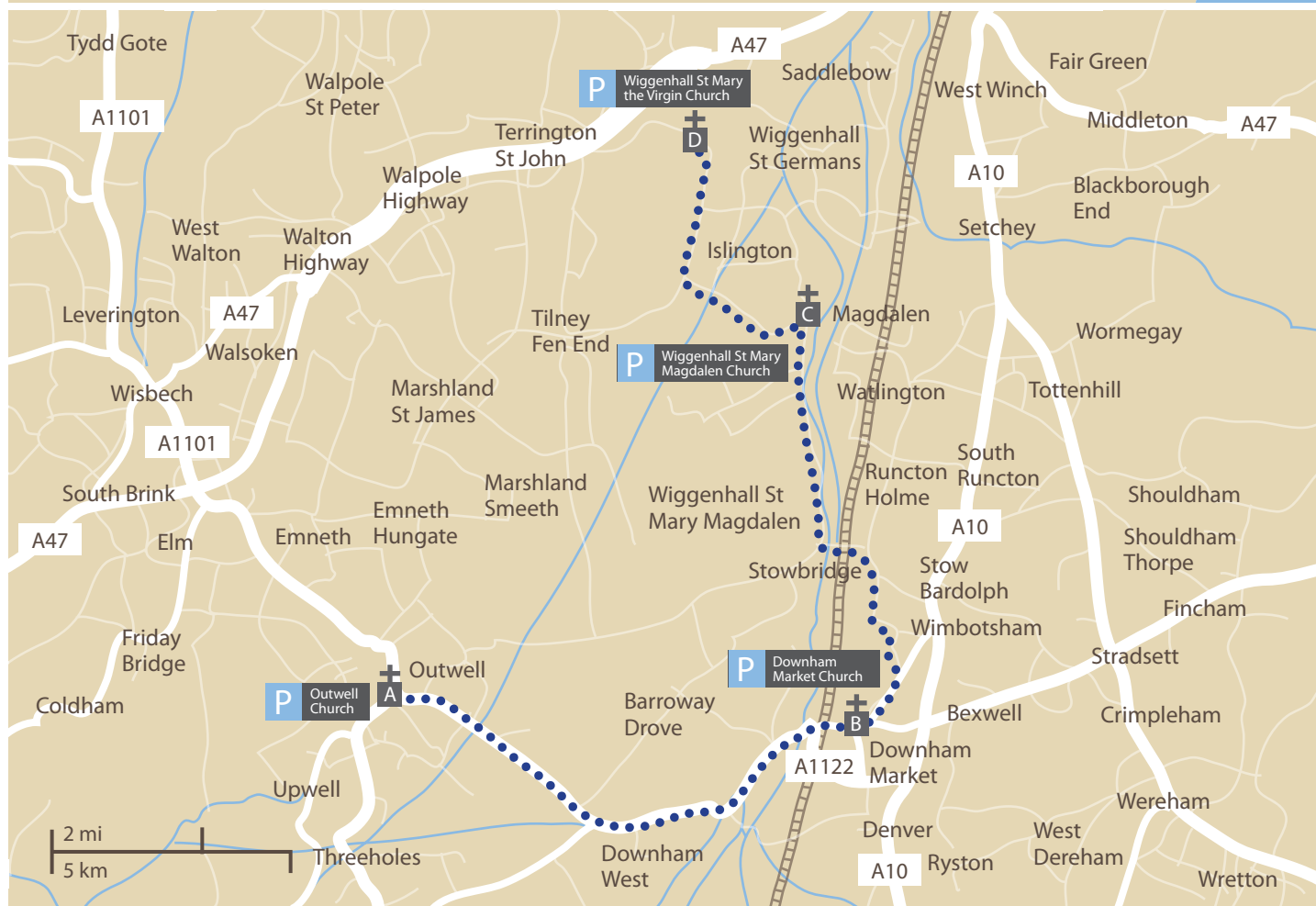
Most of the fragments date from c.1430-50, but the head of the angel on the left is c.1330-50. The top panels have naked souls praying and looking upwards, parts of a depiction of the Resurrection of the Dead from a Last Judgment, also c.1430-50. In the tracery are two heads: on the left, of a bald saint, probably S Paul, and on the right a man in a cap in good 16th-century glass, perhaps from a Crucifixion. In the 18th century a north chancel window had a depiction of the Holy Trinity with God the Father holding Christ and a north aisle window depicted the emblems of two of the Evangelists, the eagle of S John and the bull of S Luke.

## 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		Parking	
Church		Railway	



**WIGGENHALL, ST MARY MAGDALEN. PE34 3BX.  
TF 598 115. Normally open in daylight.**

Another member of this group of superb churches and, with its soaring proportions, almost the finest. It now needs a seriously rich benefactor.

All but the tower was rebuilt in the 1430s, at a higher level which has revealed evidence of flooding and which makes one stoop to enter the tower. There are 15th century benches, the remains of a screen with pictures of the symbols of the evangelists, angels carved on the corbels on which the roof rests, an old door to the stair leading to the parvise (the upper room in the porch – now gone) and, amid all this late gothic glory, a cool, simply and elegantly lettered Commandment Board.

Since 2000 a peacock has kept an eye on who comes into the churchyard.



**The Glass**

All six windows of the north aisle have figures of c.1420-30 in the tracery lights. The three easternmost have the odd figure of a female saint which does not belong here and was probably moved from the south windows. The rest depict the Nine Orders of Angels in the east window of the aisle and male figures of sainted popes, archbishops, bishops and martyrs in the north windows. All these are taken, with the exception of S Edmund Rich and a now lost S Hugh, from the litany of the saints in the Sarum Breviary. The patron of the church was the Cluniac Priory of Castle Acre and that order put great emphasis on prayer and the liturgy.

The glass can be seen as a kind of visual perpetual litany encouraging prayers to the saints portrayed. At least three workshops were involved in the north aisle glazing. One did the westernmost window, which is of the highest quality and very colourful, another made the second from the west, with silvery-white figures, and the next three windows were made by a less skilled workshop which made some errors in the costume and attributes of the saints. The saints were given name labels, but some have disappeared or are difficult to read now. There is not space for all the names, but as an example the westernmost window has Ss Brice, Aldhelm, Sixtus, Samson, German and Cuthbert along the bottom and Callixtus and Hilary above.

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Above:  
Stained glass at Wickenhall church

**WIGGENHALL, ST MARY THE VIRGIN. PE34.  
TF 583 145. Key from house next door.**

Another of the magnificent Fen churches, built inches above sea level. The tower base and doorways are 13th-century but the rest is 15th, much restored by G E Street in the 19th. The great glory of the church is the series of carved bench ends, images of saints, most of whom can be identified but some still baffle. Those on the south side, to judge by the style of clothes and hairdo, date from the start of the 15th century, those on the north perhaps a hundred years later. There is a delightful font cover with pelican, an eagle lectern, the lower part of a painted screen, a monument to the last of the Kerviles and the heart brass of an earlier one.

*“The great glory of the church  
is the series of carved bench ends”*

At Wiggenhall S German's, a half mile east, there are more bench ends. The fine ruin to be seen to the south is Wiggenhall S Peter.

**The Glass**

This cannot compete with the bench-ends and lectern, but enough remains to show that the church was once fully glazed with coloured glass. None of the religious subject matter survives, except for one head of c.1500-1510 in the north clerestory, accompanied by a shield of Kervile. The head must be part of one of the Apostles recorded there by Blomefield along with the Annunciation, a figure of the Saviour and an extensive series of shields of various members of the Kervile family, lords of the manor here.

The glass was made by the same workshop as that which did the east window of the south aisle at Outwell, not far distant. The windows in the lower part of the church are earlier, from the second half of the 14th century and many of them have fragments of heraldry of that date and some pieces of architectural canopies which would have been placed over figures. The shields are of local manorial lords and the lost coats of arms are recorded in eleven different antiquarian sources. Many of the lords represented held land in the hundred of Freebridge, in which the church lies and in the neighbouring hundred of Clackclose.

**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:**



### **Find out more by visiting the centre**

Hungate Medieval Art  
St Peter Hungate Church  
Princes St, Norwich NR3 1AE

### **Opening hours**

Thursday to Saturday 10.00 – 16.00  
Admission charges apply: Adult £3, Concession £2.50

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