

The rood or chancel screen was the visual focus of the medieval parish church, separating the sacred space of the chancel from the more public nave. In East Anglia, many richly decorated screens survive as testimony to the impressive craftsmanship of medieval painters and carpenters and also to parish pride and patronage. These screens are a unique reminder of the engagement of ordinary people with the Christian Church and of their devotional preferences, representing one of the most important means of communication before widespread literacy. As a body, existing fifteenth-century rood screen paintings form the most significant corpus of late medieval English painting. This series aims to draw attention to some of these medieval treasures and to encourage visitors to explore the beautiful churches where these screens are to be found.

Remember that these painted screens are very old and fragile. Please do not touch the painted surfaces nor lean anything against them.

Collect the complete series:



Find out more by visiting Hungate:

St Peter Hungate Church
Princes Street
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Opening hours:

Saturdays 10:00 – 16:00 Sundays 14:00 – 16:00

Entrance free

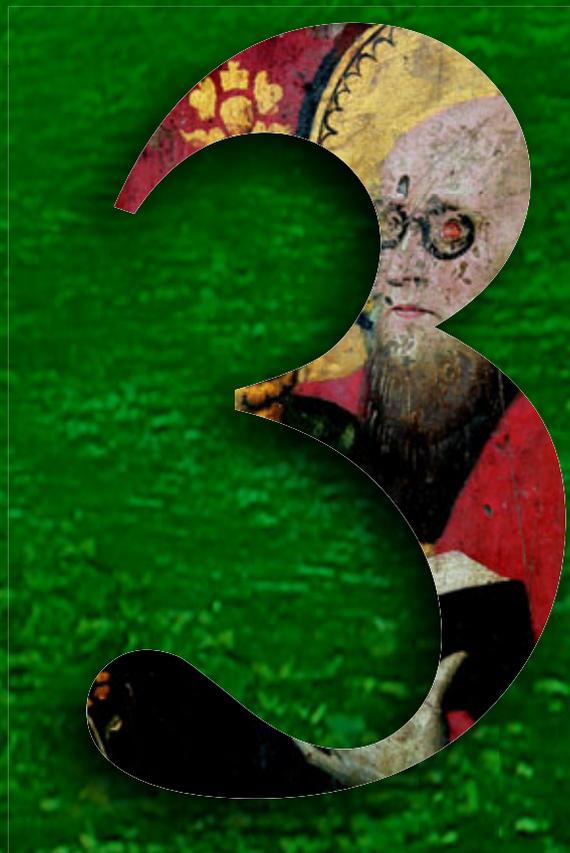
Written and produced by Hungate in collaboration with Sarah Cassell at the University of East Anglia as part of the 'Heaven's Gate: Medieval Rood Screens from Norfolk' exhibition. Hungate promotes the astonishing wealth of medieval art and artefacts still surviving in Norfolk. Designed by Brian Williams Korteling. Printed with support of the Barbara Whatmore Charitable Trust.

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Many of the photographs in this set of rood screen trails are taken from the book "Norfolk Rood Screens" by Paul Hurst ARPS, text by Jeremy Haselock FSA, to be published by Phillimore of London in December 2012.

HUNGATE ROOD SCREEN TRAILS: NO. 3

Salle • Cawston • Aylsham • Marsham
Horsham St Faith



Hungate
www.hungate.org.uk



SALLE ST PETER & ST PAUL.

TG 110 248. postcode - NR10 4SE

Normally open.

For many people this is their favourite Norfolk church, this side of the Fens anyway. Unusually, one enters by the west door. The first impression as one enters is unforgettable: the generosity of the space inside and the soaring font cover.

It is likely that the church was built within a twenty-year span in the first half of the 15th century. It has the eloquence that one so often finds with churches largely of one build. 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 St Peter Hungate, this was one of Prince Frederick Duleep Singh's rescues in the early 20th century, 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.

In the south aisle there is stained glass dateable to c.1411. The east window in the north aisle is a little later. Contemporary with the building of the chancel in 1440, are the remains of a sumptuous series of the Nine Orders of Angels, using much expensive coloured glass. This window may have been designed to promote the fading fortunes of Henry VI. There are the remains of other glass from the 1440s in the transepts.

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.

The Screen

Salle's rood screen may have lost its upper tracery, but it is one of only a handful of screens in Norfolk to retain its doors. Not all screens originally had doors, but a large number have been removed over the centuries.

Salle's screen is also unusual because the painting on it appears to be unfinished. The scheme itself is quite conventional. The panels to the north and south contain some of the twelve apostles and the four Latin Doctors of the Church are depicted on the doors. The first four panels on the north are blank; the next two contain St Thomas holding a spear and St James the Less, shown with his fuller's club. Some Latin words from the Creed can be made out over these two figures. In the medieval period, it was commonly thought that the apostles were responsible for composing the Creed and it is often found in association with the apostles on screens.

The order of saints on the doors is: St Gregory, St Jerome, St Augustine and St Ambrose. To the south side, St Philip and St Bartholomew can be just about deciphered. The final four compartments, as with the north side, were never completed. Look out for the carving of St George and the dragon in one of the spandrels over the screen.

Salle's beautiful wineglass pulpit is also medieval and is decorated in alternating green and red with silver and gold stencilling. The carvers and painters who made and decorated screens also worked on pulpits using many of the same techniques and colour schemes.

CAWSTON ST AGNES.

TG 134 238. postcode - NR10 4AJ

Normally open.

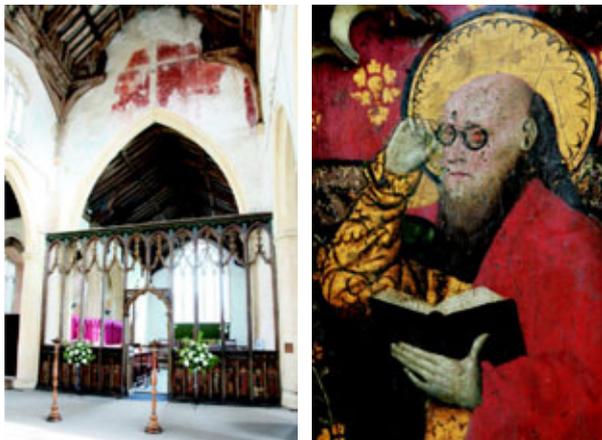
Like its neighbour Salle, this is a very grand and justly famous church, built of expensive imported stone. The superb tower has no parapet, but no expense was spared in the detailing of its west window and the doorway below with its carving of a wild man facing a dragon. Michael de la Pole, Earl of 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 spede the plow...." is picked up by an actual plough and the sign of the Plough Inn.

There are wall-paintings (the one in the south transept probably of St Agnes), bosses, carvings on pews, a fine pulpit and, in a south aisle window, stained glass dating from the early and mid-15th century. There are a beautiful head of Christ, angels

playing lutes, harps, a gittern and, in the first light, what are rather unflatteringly called pig-snout psalteries. Around the south door are small figures of St Margaret, St Agnes, St George and the dragon, and angels. This is altogether a wonderful church to explore, with care and time.

In the village are pretty houses and, a short distance east, the Ratcatchers pub will welcome you.



The Screen

Cawston possesses one of the finest surviving rood screens, not only in East Anglia but in all of Europe. The screen is notable as an example of carving and painting, which retains a lot of its upper tracery and also has twenty figure panels along the dado. Cawston's screen is especially important because will bequests at various dates attest to its construction and decoration over an extended period, telling us a lot about how rood screens came to be made and decorated.

The parishioners at Cawston saved for their rood screen and loft over a considerable time, and parts of it seem to have been decorated at different times. The earliest surviving bequest is from 1460, but bequests also remain from 1490, 1492, 1494 and 1504. The design of the woodwork of the screen points to its construction dating to after c.1485 and its painting is the product of several distinct groups of painters whose work can be found on screens elsewhere in Norfolk and Suffolk.

On the north side of the screen, the figures are St Agnes, St Helena, St Thomas, St John the Evangelist, St James the Great, St Andrew, St Paul and St Peter. These paintings all appear to be by the same workshop, which is probably the same as can be seen at Walpole St Peter.

Cawston is one of only a few screens in East Anglia to have doors. As on doors elsewhere, for example at Foulton, the four Latin Doctors of the Church are depicted; St Gregory, St Jerome, St Ambrose and St Augustine. The workshop responsible for these figures can be seen at Binham, Sparham, Elsing, Foxley and on the south side of the screen at Foulton.

On the south side of the screen, the figures are: St James the Less, St Bartholomew, St Philip, St Jude, St Simon, St Matthew, St Matthias and Sir John Schorn. The last six of these figures are painted on parchment and appear to be the work of the same painters as at Marsham, Aylsham and Worstead. The first two panels, of St Bartholomew and St James the Less are again by another painter, as the stencils used here are once again different from those elsewhere. This demonstrates the transition from the Gothic International style to increasing influence from the Low Countries. Merchants are likely to have told a cloth-producing village like Cawston of the new ideas.

AYLSHAM ST MICHAEL. TG 193 270. postcode - NR11 6BZ Normally open.

Entering the churchyard from the market place, it is worthwhile to pause for a moment and take in the gradually unravelling image of the long south side of the building. At the far left there is the sturdy tower with its spirelet, embraced by the western bays of the nave; then a two-storey porch with flushwork, with squared pale flints. Next come round flints, with many bricks, and as one reaches the transepts, the monument to the garden creator Humphrey Repton and his family, (just round the corner when you get close, the sad memorial to the Clover family) and finally, after all this grandeur, a domestic chimney and a pump.



Note the timber in the porch as you enter the great wide nave with its large transepts and chancel chapels beyond. The arcades, with octagonal

and round columns alternating, are early 14th century - earlier than one might expect from the tracery of the windows outside.

The font is 15th century with the shield of John of Gaunt (d.1399) who is said to have had the church built. The 1637 pulpit is delightfully carved. Its stair has a fine sweep for the parson's descent in front of his hushed and thoughtful auditors.

One mystery: in the elegant modern west end there are two tables of affinity, listing those relatives one should not marry. What do the people of Aylsham, otherwise a charming market town with a church to match, want to get up to?

The Screen

Aylsham's screen was once splendid, crossing this large church in six sections, across the aisles.

Although the superstructure of the screen was taken down in 1833, sixteen figures of saints and prophets remain. The screen is dated 1507 in the

inscription under the first four north side panels which refers to the donors, Thomas Wymer and his wives Joan and Margaret, as well as a John Jannys. Thomas Wymer's memorial brass, depicting him rather gruesomely in his winding cloth, can be seen on the north side of the sanctuary.

The artists responsible for the painting on the screen at Aylsham also worked at Cawston, Marsham and Worstead, and further afield at Bramfield in Suffolk. The same mould was used for the cast relief patterns here as at some of these screens, and the same figure designs can also be found between them. As well as the use of cast relief moulds, also typical of this workshop of artists is their use of prints from the Low Countries as inspiration for the figure compositions on their screens.

On the north side, the figures are: unknown prophet, St Thomas, unknown prophet, St James the Less, Moses, St James the Great, St John the Baptist, St Peter. On the south side of the screen the sequence runs: St Paul, unknown saint, St Andrew, unknown saint, St Simon, St Jude, St Matthias, St Bartholomew. Some of the unidentified figures may well be other missing apostles, such as St John the Evangelist and St Matthew.



Some of the paintings at Aylsham are on parchment (see for example the first panel on the north side or the figure of St Andrew), stuck over the wood of the panels. This may be because earlier paintings were being replaced, and the parchment was used to stick over earlier designs. The use of the parchment also meant that the painter could work off site, unlike all the rest of the paintings which were done in the church once the screen had been erected.

MARSHAM ALL SAINTS.

TG 196 236. postcode - NR10 5RB

Key notice in porch if locked.

There's a fine approach up Church Lane, off the busy Norwich – Aylsham road. The church is set in a large brick-walled churchyard with nothing but fields beyond. The walls of the church itself are not simply flint, the various textures indicating a Victorian restoration that was thorough but not harsh.

The tall porch, with its cheerfully painted ceiling, has an old door, much pinned upon over the years. Above it, the niche may hold a swallow's nest. Inside, all is light and orderly and, like all the churches on this trail, beautifully cared for. The hammerbeam roof is superb, with angels clearly happy at that celestial height. An 18th century gale shook the building so hard that crude extra supports had to be installed. The south arcade's lean remains very pronounced.

The seven sacrament font, depicting baptism, confirmation, extreme unction, the Last Judgment (on the eighth face), penance, matrimony, ordination and mass, is one of the least damaged in Norfolk. The emblems of the Evangelists are below. On the gallery above is a rare James I royal arms. There are inscriptions worth exploring on some of the memorials and some medieval stained glass in the south aisle.

The Screen

The lower part of Marsham's screen is made up of sixteen figure panels. They are decorated with saints and appear to have been painted by two different artists, most likely from the same workshop. There are several surviving wills (two of them, unusually, of women, Alice Bishop and Alice Cannelles) which leave money for the making of the screen, dating to 1503, 1507 and 1509 and the style of the painting is early 16th century. Not all the saints are easily recognisable, although it is clear that a full set of apostles are depicted. Some of the apostles break with East Anglian tradition and are not shown with their emblems.

From the north side, the panels are: a red decorated panel with gold stencilling, St Faith, St James the Less, St Thomas, St James the Great, St John the Evangelist, St Andrew, St Peter, unknown



apostle, St Philip, unknown apostle, unknown apostle, probably St Bartholomew, unknown apostle, bishop saint, and a green decorated panel with gold stencilling. The unknown apostles are probably St Jude, St Simon, St Matthew and St Matthias, but who is who is not clear.

The same painters can be seen working elsewhere in East Anglia at Cawston, Aylsham and Worstead which are nearby, but also further afield in Bramfield in Suffolk. They can be identified, not only on stylistic grounds, but because of the use of the same stencils and cast relief motifs. Both of these processes involve unique tools. This set of painters was also notable for their use of continental prints as sources for their figure compositions.

HORSHAM ST FAITH ST MARY & ST ANDREW.
TG 215 152. postcode - NR10 3JJ
Normally open.

This handsome church has a 13th century east end, a 14th century tower and, in between them, a lofty Perpendicular nave and chancel. The east wall has a charming chequerboard flint and stone pattern with a rough flush work commemoration above of a repair or extension in 1600. To the north a yew avenue leads to what remains of the Priory's refectory, now a private house with famous 13th century wall-paintings inside. As you go in, look up at the carving of St Andrew tied to the cross on which he was martyred. Ahead is a 15th century font with cuddly lion cubs at its base and a delicate Jacobean cover.

The painted panels of the pulpit are dated 1480 (notice the elegant stair of two hundred or more years later), and those of the screen 1528. There is an imperious wooden eagle lectern and some of the poppyheads on the pews are old. Don't miss the wonderfully elaborate Victorian access to the room above the porch at the west end of the south aisle. On the opposite side is a good example of how to install a lavatory in an old building.

The Screen and Pulpit

The screen is divided into twelve compartments, and the choice of saints represented on the dado is eclectic. From the north side to the south they are: an abbeys, probably St Etheldreda,



St Catherine of Siena, St Clare or St Hilda or St Anne, St Alban or St Victor, St Helena, a bishop saint, possibly St Leger, St Bridget of Sweden, St Oswald, St Apollonia, St Roch, St Margaret and St Lucy. The names of the donors are recorded on the transom and the inscription on the screen reads: 'Pray for the souls of William Wuley and Joan and Alice his wives, and for all those for whom they are obliged to pray, Amen. A.D. 1528.'

The pulpit is made up of painted panels which may have derived from a parclose screen or perhaps even the rood screen prior to the current one. It is dated 1488 and the donor, a Benedictine monk, can be seen beneath the figures of the Virgin and Child. This figure probably reflects the presence of a former Priory at Horsham St Faith, as does the choice of two figures vested as abbots, St Benedict and St Leonard who are positioned on the pulpit doors.

The figures represented on the panels of the pulpit are: the Virgin and Child with donor, St Faith, an archbishop saint, possibly St Thomas Becket, St Christopher, St Andrew, St John the Evangelist, St John the Baptist, St Stephen, St Benedict and St Leonard or Wandregisil as abbot.

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 

