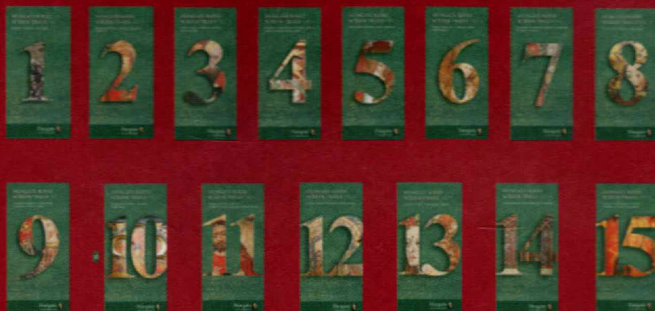


The rood or chancel screen was the visual focus of the medieval parish church, separating the sacred space of the chancel from the more public nave. In East Anglia, many richly decorated screens survive as testimony to the impressive craftsmanship of medieval painters and carpenters and also to parish 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
Norwich NR3 1AE

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.

Hungate Medieval Art - Registered charity no. 1125694

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's of London in December 2012.

HUNGATE ROOD SCREEN TRAILS: NO. 1

Bramfield • Wenhaston • Southwold



Hungate
www.hungate.org.uk



BRAMFIELD ST ANDREW.

TM 398 737. postcode - IP19 9HT

Normally open. Park by the crinkle-crinkle wall opposite.

This looks like a simple village church with a thatched roof, cream-coloured walls and a detached round tower. Some of the label stops beside the windows are well worth a look, having escaped restoration.

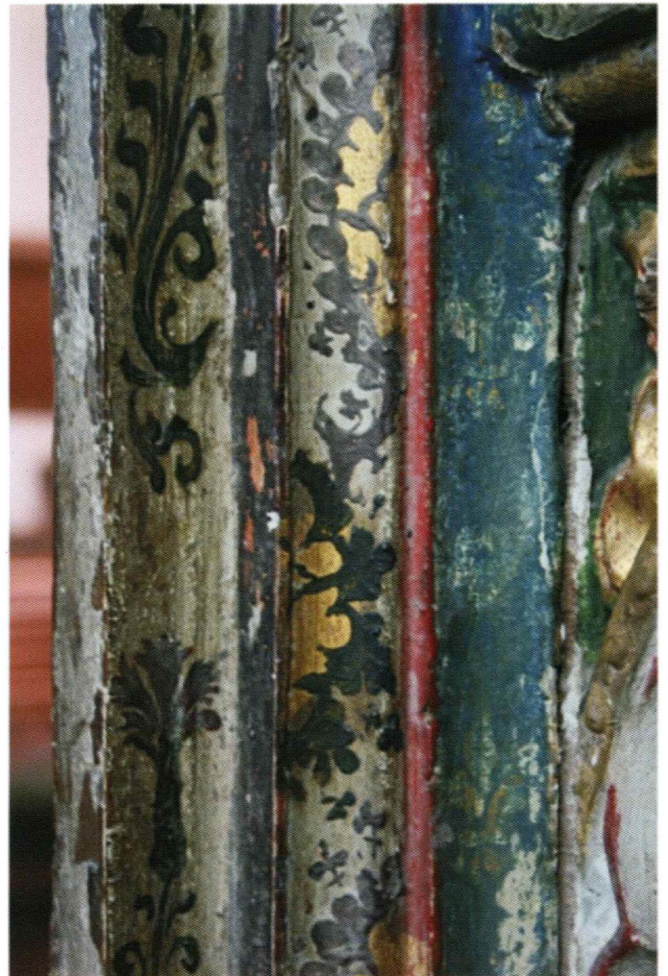
Inside there are the hatchments of the Rabett family who lived here for three hundred years. Their monuments are on the walls and, most memorably, on the floor of the chancel. For once one can trace the genealogy through the generations and there is the synopsis of a novel here. In a liturgically correct manner, it gets better the closer you come to the sanctuary. The climax is Bridgett Nelson's story, a Rabett grand-daughter. Feminists reading it might well feel the apoplexy which killed her coming on, for she suffered from the laws which transferred all a wife's possessions to her husband and his family.



Calmer by far is the Coke memorial to one side of all this. Like the family's memorial at Tittleshall in Norfolk, where forebears of the cousins at Holkham were buried, this is by Nicholas Stone. Opposite the door and still less elaborate are the banner and memorial to Lord Gladwyn, the first Secretary-General of the United Nations. Also on the north wall are the fading remains of the outline of a cross with censuring angels and scrolls of the words of the Gloria. Together with the figures on the screen celebrating an everlasting Easter, these suggest a particular cult of the Cross here.

The nave windows are unusual, probably dating from the 1870 restoration. They appear to be in the style of Constantine Woolnough, who died in the 1860s. His work can be seen at Dennington and Huntingfield.

All this in a "simple village church".



The Screen

Bramfield's 16th century screen is one of East Anglia's great treasures, both in terms of its carpentry and painting. It is beautifully decorated with figure paintings, gilded relief patterns, and expanses of costly azurite blue. Remarkably, the screen still retains the coving which previously supported its rood loft.

The screen has eight single-light bays, four to each side of the central door. It has eight dado panels, in which five saints remain. From north to south (discounting blank panels) they are; St Mark, St Matthew, St Luke, St John the Evangelist and St Mary Magdalene. All the surfaces facing the nave are beautifully decorated.

While other figure panels may have been lost, it is possible that the two outermost bays never included figures. Instead, small nave altars were probably placed against the screen, as can be seen at Wellingham in Norfolk.

It is thought that the northern side hosted the altar of the local guild of St Thomas. The south side was probably dedicated to the Virgin Mary. This side is given special attention in the decoration of the vault coving, which is covered with angels.

The painters at Bramfield worked elsewhere in East Anglia at places including Aylsham, Cawston, Marsham and Worstead in Norfolk. It is often possible to see from examination of screens that the artists painted them in situ, after they had been erected in the church.

WENHASTON ST PETER.

TM 425 755. postcode - IP19 9EG

Normally open. Park in street.

Sadly the great yew tree in the churchyard here has had to be cut down. One can see the size of its trunk. The church's south wall has two thin Norman windows and the coursed flintwork below that is often a sign of a very early building. The porch has a little parapet with pinnacles and, by the doorway, an unusual external stoup for holy water. The north side has massive brick buttresses supporting the aisle wall which, together with the north nave roof has been covered by a catslide since the 1892 repairs.

In the chancel these repairs seem totally out of sympathy with the Doom that was there before and much of what remains elsewhere in the church. The nave and aisle roof timbers are

basically old with carved bosses. The font seems oddly tucked away by the tower arch – little room for all the friends and relations. The royal arms are George III, the pulpit is Jacobean and there are panels perhaps of the same date, saved from box pews. The high windows in the south wall are to give light to a previous gallery at the west end and to the rood at the east end of the nave. As you go out, notice the rosettes and heraldic shields around the door.

This is a lovely village, with pubs and a celebrated garden centre. On the way to it Blythburgh church should not be missed.



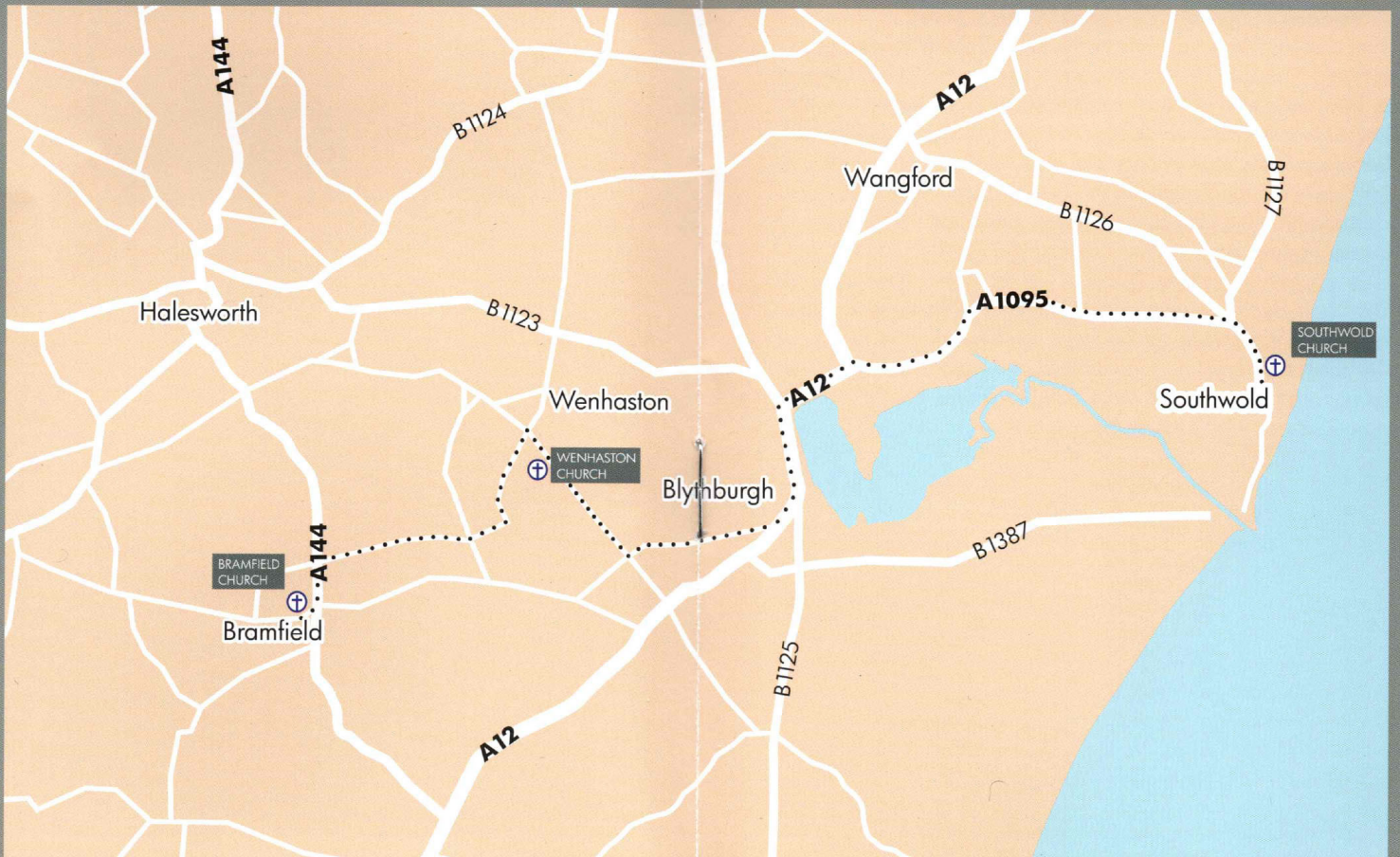
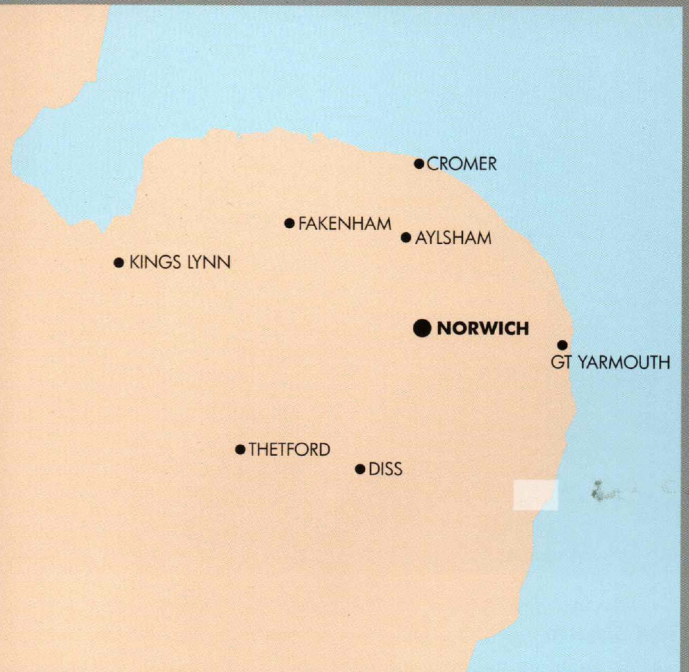
MAP OF THE TRAIL

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 ⊕





The Doom

Wenhaston's rood screen may have been removed in the early 19th century, but remarkably its medieval Doom tympanum has survived. The 16th century tympanum depicts the Last Judgement or Doom at which point Christians believe that Christ comes to judge the living and the dead. The Doom would have been the backdrop to the rood and its attendant figures of Mary and John, over the rood screen in the chancel arch. The empty spaces where the Crucifix and figures previously stood can clearly be seen.

The Doom depicts the end of the world; the elect stand to our left, the right hand side of the rood, the damned to its left. Christ sits enthroned on a rainbow above the cross beam of the cross, faced by the Virgin Mary and St John the Baptist who act as mediators or intercessors for mankind.

The two lowermost planks are painted with verses from St Paul's Epistle to the Romans. There is an earlier inscription beneath them which is no longer legible.

The Doom was rediscovered fortuitously during the remodelling of the chancel arch in 1892. The whitewashed planks of the painting were removed and left out overnight, the intention being to dispose of them. Rain washed enough of the whitewash away that figures could be made out, sparking widespread interest from the antiquarians of the day. Wenhaston's is arguably the finest surviving wooden Doom in the country.

SOUTHWOLD ST EDMUND.

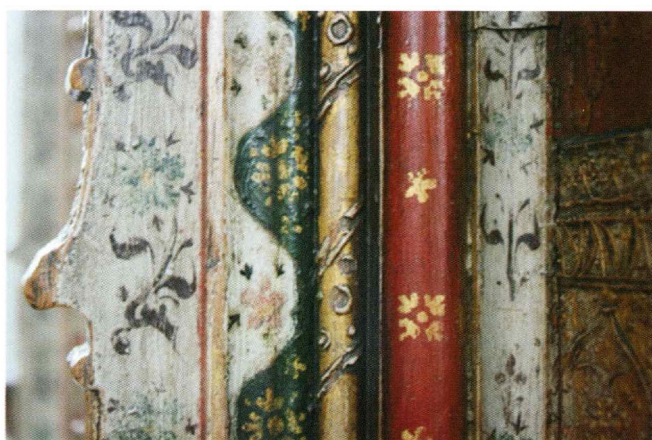
TM 507 764. postcode - IP18 6JA

Normally open. Official car parks nearby.



This is the handsome parish church of a deservedly popular town. It goes out of its way to make the visitor welcome and informed. With its tall tower and fine windows, eighteen on each side in the clerestory, it stands magnificently in its large churchyard.

Building began soon after a fire destroyed its predecessor in 1430. It may well be the finest example of flushwork in the county – patterns of flint and stone, squared on each side of the porch, vertical on the tower and buttresses and in a continuous band all round the church. It is worth walking slowly round the exterior. Time and the salt sea air have not totally defaced the carvings, at their best on the west side of the tower. Above them there is a flushwork request to St Edmund to pray for us. On the nave roof there is a spirelet, Victorian but said to be a copy of what was there before.



The two storey porch is vaulted with bosses. The panelled door is Tudor. Inside there is a handsome font with a 1935 cover resembling its likely predecessor. By the tower arch is Jack o' the Clock, ready to strike the hour – a wooden figure of 1470 still with original colouring. The angel roof, again, is said to be a faithful copy of its pre-Victorian predecessor as is the colouring of the chancel roof. In the chancel are very remarkable late 15th century stalls with little carvings between each stall that are well worth examining. Look too at the low relief carvings on each side low down as you go into the chancel. A guide to all this can be borrowed free of charge.



The Screens

Southwold possesses a very rich set of screens; a rood screen, two aisle screens and two parclose screens, all within a spectacular church. Each of the three screens that run across the church was decorated by a different painting workshop, but the iconography of the three combines to form a complementary programme of angels, apostles and prophets. The 16th century screens, which separate the north and south chapels from the chancel behind the main screen no longer have much paint, but are of interest because they have lofts.

Angels adorn the northern side of the main screen; nine of them form the hierarchy of angels. From the north the figures are: an angel carrying the shield of the Trinity, the archangel Gabriel, the archangel Michael, Powers, Dominations, Cherubim, Seraphim, Thrones, Principalities, Virtues, Angels and an angel carrying a shield depicting the Eucharist.

The central scheme is remarkable for its richness of painting and gilded relief patterns, even though the faces of the figures were largely scraped away by iconoclasts, and repainted in the 19th century. There is evidence from wills of a date of around 1460 for the screen. However, while the north and the south screens seem to be of this date and the product of the same carpenter, the central screen in both design and painting appears to be nearer 1500. Its decoration suggests that it is the latest surviving example of the Ranworth group of painters. Some of the same stencils are used here as at other screens in the group such as North Walsham.

From the north side of the central screen the apostles are: St Philip, St Matthias, St James the Less, St Thomas, St Andrew and St Peter. St Peter frames the door and is at the right hand side of the Crucified Christ if one imagines the rood originally on top of the screen. On the south side the figures are: St Paul, St John the Evangelist, St James the Great, St Bartholomew, St Jude and St Simon.

The southern screen depicts prophets standing on pedestals within architectural niches, mimicking sculpture. In turn they are: Baruch, Hosea, Nahum, unknown, a king, Moses, David, unknown, unknown, unknown, Joel, unknown. The black backgrounds are unusual and the paintings on this screen are unlike those on any other surviving screen in the region.

