

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.

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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.12

Burnham Norton • Thornham • Old Hunstanton



Hungate
www.hungate.org.uk



BURNHAM NORTON ST MARGARET.

TF 835 427. postcode - PE31 8ES

Normally open. Limited parking.

This delightful church stands alone on the undulating top of its hill, with a fine windmill visible through trees to the north-east and a thin line of sea beyond. The tower is round and early, with patterned brick in the openings. The chancel windows have c.1300 Y-tracery on the south side, later and more elaborate stonework on the north. The north door with carved headstops is also 14th century. The nave and clerestory windows are late Perpendicular with transoms, a handsome set.

The creamy limewash of the porch sets the colour tone for the interior. Straight in front is the Norman font, low, with columns and simple geometric patterns on the bowl. Not much else is low in this glorious interior. The main block of pews is screened off from the aisles, curtained at its entrance, all cosy and sensible, if a bit excluding for the occasional big event. The round pillars of the north arcade are early 14th century, those of the south arcade a little later. The chancel is uncluttered, adding to the serenity that a visitor found here and recorded.

The roofs are pale, plain and barn-like, the floors of brick. There are two pulpits, one a wine-glass painted gem, the other constructed of Jacobean panels. There are also two unusually handsome royal arms, of William III and George IV, and well-lettered Commandment Boards with angels peering down from above.

Of the many delights around here, do not miss Burnham Overy Town church, or the man in the moon in the porch and the font at Burnham Deepdale. Burnham Thorpe (and its pub) is full of Nelson memorabilia.

The Screen and Pulpit

Burnham Norton has a painted rood screen and wineglass pulpit. Both the screen and pulpit have inscriptions relating to their donors, the people who paid for them. Although the screen is badly damaged, it is still possible to read the inscription which asks the viewer to pray for the souls of William Groom and Joan his wife. The Norfolk antiquary, Francis Blomefield writing in the late 18th century noted that the screen was dated 1458, and also recorded the presence of the Virgin Mary on the screen, paired with St Ethelbert.

The first figure on the north side has been destroyed – it is here that the Virgin was probably located. The figure in the second





compartment holds a scroll still identifying him as King Ethelbert. The following two figures on the north side are ecclesiastics. On the south side, only the second panel can be said with any certainty to have contained another ecclesiastic.

The pulpit survives in better condition, having been uncovered by conservator Pauline Plummer in the 1970s. The pulpit depicts the four Latin Doctors of the Church, as well as the donors who paid for it, John and Katherine Goldalle. In turn the figures are: St Ambrose, St Gregory, St Jerome, St Augustine, John Goldalle and Katherine Goldalle.

THORNHAM ALL SAINTS.

TF 435 734. postcode - PE36 6NJ

Normally open. Parking.

This is a confident-looking church, mostly Perpendicular but incorporating much earlier work. The chancel is a Victorian rebuilding and the top of the tower, which fell in the 17th century, was only completed in the 20th.

The two-storey porch has a 15th century ceiling. The columns each side of the door are Early English, the door itself of the same date as the ceiling, with an ogee wicket. Inside, the immense width of the nave picks up the grandeur of the exterior and restoration has not spoiled the fine roof with its hammerbeams.

There are an unusually lively royal arms and a Jacobean pulpit, but the great delight of the interior, apart from the screen, is the collection of bench-ends. Look out for the boat and the post mill, like the model of one beside the door, and the depiction of some of the seven deadly sins.




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 Screen

Thornham's screen, like that at nearby Old Hunstanton, is another example of the output of artists responsible for the rood screen at Ranworth. This workshop, most probably based in Norwich, is arguably the finest in East Anglia at the end of the 15th/beginning of the 16th century. Screens were painted in situ and so the artists must have travelled to this part of the coast to undertake their work.

Most of the sixteen figures shown here are Old Testament prophets, although they are supplemented with several saints. The figures hold scrolls and are named beneath. Beginning at the north side, they are: St Barbara, St Paul, Amos, Hosea, Zechariah, Isaiah, King David, Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Joel, Micah, Malachi, Daniel, Ezekial, Lazarus and St Mary Magdalene, the only depiction in Norfolk of the reputed brother and sister. The two female saints here are particularly associated with the Eucharist.



Unlike the saints painted by this group of artists, the prophets are painted in outlandish and exotic hats. Many of the same stencils as at Ranworth, Old Hunstanton and Filby can be seen. Familiar too is the tiled flooring and brocade patterns on the robes of the figures.

The upper part of the screen has been taken down at some point in its history, but the leafy carving in the spandrels of the dado survives and is of high quality.

OLD HUNSTANTON ST MARY.

TF 688 420. postcode - PE36 6JS

Normally open. Car park.

This is a little to the north of the modern town and at the entrance to what was, for seven centuries, the Le Strange estate. This is significant for Henry Styleman Le Strange, himself an artist, paid for the very thorough mid-19th century restoration by his cousin Frederick Preedy.



The tower is 15th century but the very steep roof of the nave is surely Preedy's. You enter through a porch of such Victorian conviction that you have to stop for a moment and think again about our readiness to dismiss Victorian work, particularly that which is not respectful to what went before. This is a bold and eloquent statement by a good architect given his head. Look at the huge corbels carrying the elaborate roof or Preedy's series of stained glass windows.

Not all is 19th century. The font is Norman and the arcades are late 13th. There are fine medieval brasses, some on the big table tomb in the north aisle, a monument/Easter sepulchre modelled on Hingham's – and there is the screen.



The Screen

The screen at Old Hunstanton consists of six bays and twelve panels, upon which the apostles are depicted. The coving at the top of the screen is not original, but has been sensitively attached to the original uprights. The painting is of high quality and is by the same workshop as the famous paintings at Ranworth, more than fifty miles away to the south east. Examination of rood screens shows that they were almost invariably painted on site in the churches for which they were made. The Ranworth and Old Hunstanton painters must therefore have been itinerant at least some of the time.

The resemblance between Old Hunstanton's screen and that at Ranworth is not only stylistic; a number of the stencils used to decorate the alternating green and red backgrounds of the panels are the same as those found at Ranworth and at a number of other churches, including Thornham and Filby. About ten different screens can be ascribed to the Ranworth group of artists.

The saints on the screen are identified by both their emblems and by inscriptions bearing their names. They are, from north to south: St Jude, St Simon, St James the Less, St Matthew, St Bartholomew, St Peter, St Paul, St John the Evangelist, St James the Great, St Andrew, St Philip and St Thomas.

