



# A Company of Angels: Norfolk's Angel Roofs In The Making

30th May to 12th July 2026

## Glossary

### Architectural Terms

**Bay:** The space between architectural elements (e.g. windows), or a recess or compartment.

**Beam:** Major horizontal load-bearing timber.

**Brace:** Timber usually set between vertical and horizontal members to provide triangulation.

**Brattishing:** Decorative cresting at the top of a beam or cornice.

**Chancel:** The part of the east end of a church containing the high altar and reserved for the clergy, often separated by a chancel arch and/or a rood screen.

**Clerestory** (sometimes 'clearstorey'): The upper part of the nave, transepts, and chancel of a church, when it contains windows that rise above the roofs of the aisles.

**Common rafter:** Uniform inclined timbers that directly support the roof covering. Smaller in section than principal rafters.

**Corbel:** Stone or timber projecting from a wall which appears to support the wall-post above. Often carved, for instance as angels in late medieval roofs. Not necessarily load-bearing.

**Cornice:** Ornamental moulding of the wall-plate.

**Crossing:** The central area formed by the junction of the nave, transepts and chancel in a cruciform church. Where there is a central tower, the crossing is beneath it.

**Double-framed roof:** Roof with both principal rafters and purlins.

**Hammerbeam:** Horizontal transverse timber projecting from the inner face of the wall plate. Supports the hammer post.

**Hammer post:** Vertical timber, rising from the end of the hammer-beam. In conventional hammer-beam construction the hammer post is tenoned vertically into the hammer-beam. Pendant posts developed later in the fifteenth century (e.g. Cotton St Andrew, Earl Stonham St Mary) for decorative advantage. Here the hammer-beam is tenoned horizontally into the hammer post, with negative structural implications.

**Mortice and Tenon:** A carpentry joint consisting of a protruding element, the **tenon**, made as a single piece in one timber, with a receiving slot or recess, the **mortice**, cut into the second timber/beam.

**Nave:** The western, usually larger, portion of a church. The space used by the lay congregation.

**Pitch:** a description of how steep, or otherwise, the angle of a roof is.

**Principal rafter:** Often called simply a 'principal'. An inclined timber of heavier dimensions than common rafters; supports purlin(s) which in turn support common rafters; often corresponds with the bay divisions of a building.

**Purlin:** Longitudinal roof timber supporting common rafters, usually set in the plane of the roof; framed into the principal rafters.

**Queen-post:** Timber rising vertically from a tie-beam to support a purlin or plate; set in pairs.

**Ridge:** Longitudinal timber framed at the top of a roof.

**Single-framed roof:** Constructed without principal trusses; lacking purlins framed to principals.

**Tie-beam:** Horizontal structural timber connecting walls or other vertical elements to prevent sideways movement and add stability.

**Transepts:** Wings of a cruciform church, extending to the north and/or south. Often containing side chapels.

**Vaulting:** Arches that support (or appear to support) a roof or ceiling.

**Wall-plate:** Structural timber fixed at the top of the wall. The main connection point for rafters and ties. Designed to distribute the load evenly across the supporting walls, preventing sagging and maintaining alignment.

**Wall-post:** Vertical timber which transfers loads from beams and walls to the ground and adds stability.

### Iconographic References

**Bishop's Mitre:** A ceremonial pointed headdress worn by a bishop to symbolise his role and office. Often associated with the crozier, a staff symbolising his role as shepherd of his flock.

**Book of Revelation:** The final book of the New Testament, written by the Apostle John around 95 CE. Also known as the Apocalypse of John. It includes a vivid description of the Last Judgement, when Christ will return to grant the righteous eternal life in heaven and damn the wicked to eternal hell.

**Book of Seven Seals:** The seven seals are found in the Book of Revelation. They seal a scroll/book which can only be opened by the Lamb of God, symbolising Jesus Christ. Each seal, when broken, reveals significant events that are associated with the end times and the final judgment.

**Passion:** The word passion comes from the Latin word for suffering. Christ's Passion is the story of Jesus Christ's arrest, trial, suffering and crucifixion, which led to his resurrection.

**Instruments of the Passion:** Also known as the **Arma Christi** (Weapons of Christ). These were widely depicted in late medieval art and can appear on shields held by roof angels or as items carried by roof angels. They include the **Crown of Thorns** which, according to three of the gospels, was placed on Christ's head during the crucifixion, the **cross**, the **hammer and nails**, the **pincers**, the **sponge** and the **ladder**.

**Mass:** The central ritual of the Catholic Church. The medieval mass included prayer, music, and the symbolic reenactment of Christ's sacrifice. Items used at mass and depicted in some angel roofs include the **chalice**, a vessel to hold the wine turned into Christ's blood, the **pyx** to hold the bread to be consecrated as Christ's body, and the **candlestick**.

**Nine orders of angels:** The most influential hierarchy of angels was developed by Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (c. fifth century CE). He separated the nine angelic orders mentioned in scripture into three subdivisions; the first comprised **Seraphim**, **Cherubim** and **Thrones**, closest to God; the second, **Virtues**, **Dominations or Dominions** and **Principalities**, and the third, **Powers**, **Archangels** and **Angels** closest to humanity.

**Pallium:** Woollen vestment worn or bestowed upon others by the Pope, as a mark of distinction. It symbolises Christ as the Good Shepherd, carrying a lamb on his shoulders.

**Reformation:** The religious revolution that took place across Europe in the sixteenth century.

**Rood:** Carving or painting of Christ Crucified, usually flanked by figures of Mary and John the Baptist, which stood on the **rood loft** and over the **rood screen**, separating the nave from the chancel.

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