

The city of Norwich has 31 medieval parish churches, of which 8 have angel roofs. The variety of these roofs mean that as a group they can be used as an introduction to the many others to be found in Norfolk.

All of these churches offer at least some public access. On the back of this leaflet you will find a map, and links to websites with up-to-date opening information to help you plan your visits.

St Gregory

This late 14th century nave and chancel roof can be described as a possible precursor to the full 'angel roof'. It is an alternating tie-beam and arch-braced structure. The arch braces rise from short wall-posts above timber, rather than stone, corbels in the form of angels.

There are snowflake bosses at the ridge. The roof boarding appears to have been painted, and the aisle roofs feature similar designs.



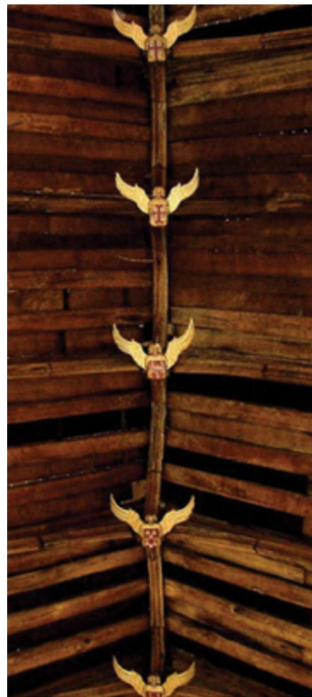
St Giles

The nave roof probably dates from the 1420s. It features arch-braced hammerbeam angels. They were probably painted, like the shields they carry. These display the contemporary royal arms, endorsing Henry IV and the Lancastrian cause.

There are some parallels between the roof structure here and that at Carbrooke SS Peter and Paul (c. 1424), W of Norwich. The Carbrooke roof was restored in the 19th century, but the angels were probably six-winged (seraphim) and held similar shields.



St Michael at Pleas



The nave roof appears at first glance to be arch braced with demi-angels at the ridge.

In fact, shortened angel hammerbeams project through the arch braces. These are recognisable from their toes and drapery.

There are bosses at some of the beam ends.

The steeply-pitched roof design at St Giles was probably adapted and reused here.

St Swithin (Norwich Arts Centre)

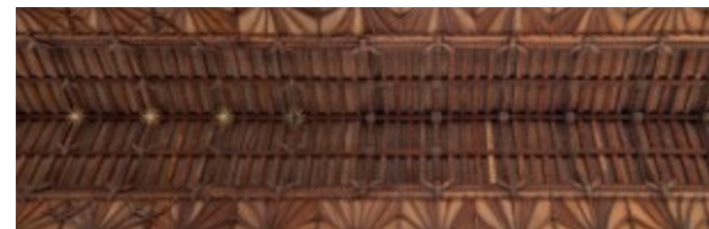
Although difficult to see today, angel hammerbeams above the clerestory windows alternate with arch-braced tie beams supporting queenposts. The beam angels carry shields. They rest on short arch braces, with smaller angels underneath. There are large shield-bearing angel corbels under the braced wall-posts to the tie-beams.



This alternating roof form is the only surviving one in Norwich, and was influenced by the west Norfolk type developed at St Nicholas Chapel in King's Lynn.

St Peter Mancroft

At St Peter Mancroft (about 1440-1460), the main roof appears to span the nave and chancel as a single entity. In fact, fan-vaulted timber coving hides two separate and distinct hammerbeam structures, created during a rather piecemeal rebuild. The lower tier, of twenty carved demi-angels, marks the ends of the hidden hammerbeams. The only other surviving examples in Norfolk of this kind of vaulted design are at St John Maddermarket in Norwich (restored) and at Ringland St Peter (15th century).



St John Maddermarket

The main roof at St John Maddermarket probably dates from the early 1450s. As at St Peter Mancroft, the hammerbeams are hidden by timber fan-vaulted coving. There are angel corbels at the end of the long wall-posts between the clerestory windows.

Painted panelled roofs were designed for the aisle chapels, each with four angels holding scrolls. The Lady chapel panels are still in place; those from All Saints' chapel are in the Norfolk Museums Service store.

St Peter Hungate

At Hungate, the braced hammerbeam roof spans the nave and transepts. The braces are set diagonally at the crossing. This sophisticated cruciform design probably influenced nearby St Mary Coslany (1460s) and Stody St Mary (15th century) in north Norfolk.

The corbels under the wall-posts in the nave represent four early Doctors of the Church, and those in the crossing, the four Evangelists. The beam angels are attached, or carved into, the underside of the beams, in a design otherwise only found at Wymondham Abbey, and in small number of churches in NE Norfolk.

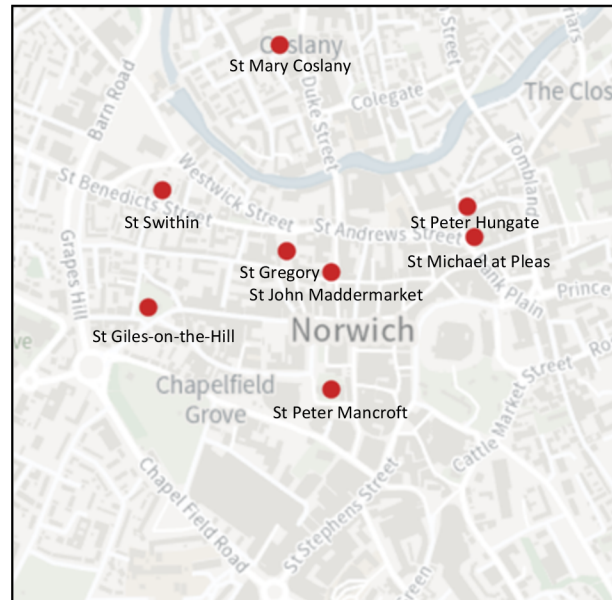
In the transepts, the angels surround an impressive boss representing the Last Judgement, a theme which is repeated in the images of St Michael, and of an angel in the nave carrying the book of Seven Seals.



St Mary Coslany

The roof at the crossing of the nave and transepts features a central boss of the Assumption of the Virgin in an aureole. Four carved angels in ecclesiastical dress are attached beneath the diagonal arch braces. The roof probably dates from the middle of the 1460s, and, in the form of its crossing, to refer to the Hungate roof.

Churches mentioned in this trail



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Not all churches are open every day, for details see:
St Giles-on-the-Hill & St Peter Mancroft

www.achurchnearyou.com

St John Maddermarket www.visitchurches.org.uk

Remaining churches www.nhct-norwich.org



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The Angel Roofs of Norwich



A self-guided trail to accompany

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

30th May to 12th July 2026

Text by Sarah Cassell

HUNGATE
www.hungate.org.uk