

Discovering Broadland's Churches

II mile route from Salle to Weston Longville

Salle St Peter and St Paul

One of the most splendid and beautiful churches in Norfolk, St Peter and St Paul dates from the time when the wool industry was at its most prosperous in East Anglia. It was built mainly by Thomas Rose and the Boleyn, Fountaine and Brigg families. The building lasted throughout the 15th century - a stained glass window in the north transept shows the different stages. The church is one of very few that is entirely 15th century without later improvements. The magnificent 111ft tower was built between 1422 and 1461 although the top storey was added at the end of the 15th century. The church was completed in 1500 and in 1550 the government carried out a church and state revolution. Royal commissioners visited Salle church to eradicate any superstitious items and many beautiful features were destroyed.

Inside the church, you will immediately notice the huge font and its ornate cover held up by a wooden arm. The font is one of seven sacrament fonts in Norfolk and Suffolk and still shows traces of original colour. It was damaged by Puritans ordered by Parliament to deface images and figures. Note to the seven angels holding symbols such as an altar stone and a chalice.

The nave roof is a good example of mediaeval carpentry with angels and faces decorating the beams. The roof in the south transept is also very fine and is said to have been copied in the lobby of the House of Lords. Also note the nine roof bosses in the chancel, representing the life of Christ; including the nativity, the last supper and the crucifixion. Their position makes them difficult to see which is probably the reason why they escaped damage by the Puritans.

The north transept used to contain two altars; of the Holy Trinity and the Blessed Virgin Mary. Sir Alfred Jodrell restored this transept in 1910 - 12 and gave the three stained glass windows - two retain pieces of original glass. The north window was blocked up in 1801 to make space for the mural tablet of Edward Hase. He married Virtue Repps - heiress to Nugon's and Hawe's Manor - in 1751.

Other memorials include a floor brass to Thomas and Katrina Rose - very successful sheep owners - and their eight sons and four daughters; and a floor brass to John Brigg, showing a naked figure. His son, Thomas left £1 6s 8d for a marble stone for his father. Thomas Brigg added the south transept. He died in 1444 and was buried there.

In 1910, Sir Woolmer White paid for restoration of the nave and aisles and items of furniture, including the organ which he

gave in memory of his sister Emily.

Note the stairways either side of the tower. One leads to the Lady Chapel, which was used as a schoolroom for many years. The chancel was built around 1450 by John Neldon, Rector 1441-1460. Only the lower part of the screen remains - the upper part was sawn off in the 16th century.

Part of the creed is inscribed over paintings of the apostles. There are twenty-six oak stalls - those on the south side have human heads carved into them; those on the north side have birds and animals. It is worth spending time to appreciate all this lovely church has to offer.

Great Witchingham St Mary

An imposing looking flint church, built mainly in the 14th century, St Mary's stands with the vicarage, a farmhouse and a few cottages. A church has existed in Great Witchingham since the 11th century and the earliest part of the present building dates from around 1290.

The chancel is part of the earlier church. Its upkeep was the responsibility of the priest, who would have had less money to spend on restoration than the parishioners, who looked after other parts of the church.

The 15th century south porch has two flint friezes and spandrels showing an Annunciation scene - Archangel Gabriel unwinds a scroll while Virgin Mary kneels. The interior is light and airy with many plain glass windows, mostly 14th century. The roof is late mediaeval and has angels along the ridge. Note the list of vicars going back to 1290. The most well known is Henry Bathurst, who became Bishop of Norwich in 1805. The lectern is shaped like a large eagle and came from the Chapel of New College, Oxford. There are four mediaeval benches in the nave which have designs carved into them.

Perhaps the most interesting feature in the church is the 15th century seven sacrament font, which retains much original colour.

Near the altar in the south aisle is a monument to Thomas Alley (d.1650) with an interesting inscription: 'Death here advantage hath of life I spye, One husband with two wives at once may lie'. There are several monuments to the Le Neve family who settled in Witchingham in the early 17th century. These include one in the north chancel to Oliver Le Neve, a High Church Tory who moved to Great Witchingham Hall in 1692 and had a rather tragic life.

In the 1698 election Sir Henry Hobart of Blickling lost his seat and accused Le Neve of slandering his name. They fought a duel and Hobart died from a mortal stomach wound, although he had been expected to win easily. Le Neve then escaped to Holland as Hobart's relatives wanted revenge. He eventually returned in 1700, before dying in 1711 of apoplexy, just four months after the death of his only son.

Alderford St John the Baptist

This is a small, simple but attractive church. Dating from the early 14th century it has a thin square tower. The church used to be larger but the north aisle was blocked off and outside the remains of a piscine, or basin, can be seen.

Over the porch is a 19th century wooden sundial with the words 'Redeem the time' in raised lettering, and the south door has a beautiful iron knocker which is at least 600 years old. Before you enter the church notice the beautiful grave stone to the right of the porch, to Kate Rose Anna Thurston - a garland of flowers wrapped around a cross.

The windows of the south wall are all different shapes and sizes. The large window has

fragments of old stained glass at the top. If you look carefully you can see lion's heads and a bird.

This church has a seven sacrament font, dating back from the 15th century. The font dates depicts baptism, ordination, mass, penance, confirmation, marriage and extreme unction (anointing). The eighth panel, which varies from church to church, shows the crucifixion. Birds and angels are depicted on the top, and figures of St James with its pilgrims purse, St Andrew with cross saltire, St John with a chalice and St Philip with loaves of bread are carved into the shaft.

St John the Baptist's church, together with the churches at Attlebridge and Swannington, lies on the old pilgrims' way from Norwich to the Shrine of Our Lady, at Walsingham.

Weston Longville All Saints

This church was built mainly in the 14th century, but has a square rather squat 13th century tower. The architectural style is a mix of 'decorated' (1290 - 1350) and 'perpendicular' (1350 - 1530). Major repairs were carried out in 1850, which included the addition of the present pulpit, prayer desks and open pews with poppy head ends. It was reported in 1602 that the tower had collapsed due to the negligence of the inhabitants, but that they had enough wealth to re-build it. In 1880 the chancel was restored by the Rector and friends.

As you enter the church, note the list of Rectors, dating back to 1290, and the Royal Arms of George III. On the north side of the tower arch is a portrait of Parson James Woodforde, Rector from 1775 - 1803. He was made famous by the publication of his diaries which gave a wonderful insight into country life in the 18th century. There is a memorial tablet to him, erected by his nephew and niece, and he is buried in the chancel. Underneath his portrait are several memorial slabs with lovely lettering - some are to people mentioned in his diaries.

The font is supported by five 13th century Purbeck marble pillars. It is set on steps which encase the oldest feature in the church - a Saxon stone calvary (crucifix). The clerestory has five quatrefoil windows on each side and the bright pew hassocks were designed in the shape of these windows. They were made by parishioners in the 1970's. The 15th century rood screen is extremely well preserved - twelve painted panels depict the Apostles. There are wall paintings both sides of the screen - on the north side is St John the Baptist, a 14th century painting, discovered in 1967.

Another large wall painting can be seen on the north wall, known as the 'Tree of Jesse'. The organ is one of the finest in the diocese of Norwich. The sanctuary has a piscina and three 14th century sedilia (seats) surrounded by beautiful stone work including a face with a tongue sticking out and a canopy of flowers. The carved stone backdrop to the altar is another Victorian addition.

Note the brass memorial to Elyzabeth Rokewood (d.1533), showing a woman in period dress, and the box pews with memorials to the Custance family. Outside are graves to members of this family including the 'Squires' Grave' below the east window. This church has many interesting features to offer the visitor.

Salle to Weston Longville

Directions

The tour begins in Salle, North West of Norwich. From the outer ring road take the A140 signed Cromer and after 1 ¾ miles turn left signed Holt, B1149. Continue for 7 ½ miles then turn left at the roundabout signed Cawston, B1145. Follow this road for 3 miles going through the village and out into the countryside.

- 1 Take the second right towards Salle. Take the next left signed Salle Street and the church is on the right.
- 2 From the church turn back along the same road and at the junction turn right.
- 3 At the next junction turn right again signed Reepham.
- 4 After ½ mile turn left signed Reepham Moor. Follow this lane under the railway bridge and go straight ahead at the junction signed Booton. At the next junction turn left.
- 5 After about ½ mile turn right into Furze Lane (not signed), signed Great Witchingham, and continue for 2 miles. The next church comes into view.
- 6 From the church take Heath Lane signed Lenwade.
- 7 Take the next left signed Alderford and continue for about ½ mile.

- 8 Bear left at the junction towards Alderford passing Great Witchingham Hall on the right and after a further ¾ mile the next church is on your left.
- 9 From the church continue on the same road and at the junction bear right signed Attlebridge.
- 10 Take the next right at the crossroads, signed Attlebridge.
- 11 Go through the village and turn right at the junction on to the Fakenham A1067 road.
- 12 Take the next left onto Marl Hill and follow for a further mile into the village - the last church on our tour is on the left.

This is where our tour ends. To return to Norwich take the same road out of the village back to the A1067 - Turn right signed Norwich and this road will take you back to the city.

