

# Discovering Broadland's Churches

## 10 mile route from Rackheath to Ranworth

### **Rackheath All Saints**

A quaint church, built in the early 14th century, which stands



remote from the village. The first Rector was Robert Est in 1300. The church was restored recently after suffering decay and vandalism. It originally had a flat roof, but a sloping one was added in 1835, cutting the clerestory windows in half. The hexagonal font had been smashed into several pieces but was rescued, repaired and re-instated in 1980 in the south aisle.

Note the stave locker where the banners which were carried on Sundays and feast days would rest. The stained glass is Victorian and was a gift from Sir Henry Stracey. The Stracey family and also the Pettus family who lived at Rackheath from 1591 to 1772. The church still has no electricity, but services are held by candle light. It is now redundant and in the care of the Norfolk Churches Trust.

### **Wroxham St Mary**

This church is set on high ground beside the river Bure to



the west of the village. It was built in perpendicular style, mainly in the 15th century when the town was at its most prosperous. As you enter the church, note the Norman doorway with its unusual blue stain, probably 19th century - one of a group of six similar ones in Norfolk. Also note the miniature columns sprouting grotesque heads and figures. The porch was rebuilt in 1849 by the Humfrey family - their shields can be seen over the archway. The door handle is 13th century. The church has memorials to the Collyer family and

also a ledger-stone to Ann Spendlove who died in 1588. It was her husband, Hugh, who was responsible for rebuilding Wroxham Bridge in 1596. In the churchyard is the Trafford Mausoleum built in 1829 by Anthony Salvin. It was Salvin's first ecclesiastical building and led to further work at Norwich Cathedral and Castle. There are some interesting gravestones including one near the base of the tower in memory of Edward Allen, bearing an inscription telling of his murder, and a group of family gravestones belonging to the Stevenson's, local blacksmiths.

### **Thatched Salhouse Church**

Unfortunately this church is usually kept locked, but is



worth a look. The priests and vicars who took services in this church also served in Wroxham St Mary's until 1935 when the two parishes separated. The church was greatly restored in 1881 and the roof was renewed, retaining its original features. In the tower are two bells, one dated 1481 and imported from Oxburgh in 1485, the other of unknown date, bears the inscription '...belonging to the church of Salhouse broken and mended in 1630'.

Several windows bear stained glass, among them memorials to Richard and Elizabeth Ward, Brenda Ward, John R Campling and Kate and Stanley Wiley.

### **Woodbastwick St Fabian and St Sebastian**

The picturesque village of Woodbastwick is grouped



around the village green and church. The age of the church is uncertain although the dedication is certainly medieval. The royal heads over the East window would give a clue to the time of the building of the church if they were identifiable. Woodbastwick - is unique in the Church of England in having its church dedicated to these two saints. St Fabian was a pope and St Sebastian a soldier, martyred for his faith.

The cosy interior of the church has a Victorian feel as there were many repairs in the middle of the 19th century. The top of the tower was also added at this time. These changes were based on plans drawn up by Sir George Gilbert Scott - the best church architect of the time, but perhaps better known for his

design of the Albert Memorial in London. The work was completed in 1878 to a very high standard of craftsmanship. The figure of St Fabian over the porch was included in the restoration. The church was vandalised in Cromwellian time - the screen appears to have been replaced twice.

There are many memorials to the Cator family, who were Lords of the Manor and still live in Woodbastwick. These include two unusually shaped tablets dedicated to Anne Cator and her sister-in-law, Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon. There is also an interesting war memorial of marble and glass mosaic. The church is an extremely attractive and peaceful place to visit.

### **Ranworth St Helen**

This church stands on a hill close to Ranworth and



Malthouse Broads and commands magnificent views over the area from the top of its tower. It is dedicated to St Helen who was the mother of the first Christian Roman Emperor, Constantine, and was built on the site of a previous Saxon Church. Dating from the 14th century, the church has one of England's finest rood screens with beautiful painted panels. The church has many other items of interest including good examples of Misericord seats in the choir stalls, a pre-Reformation Cantor's desk and the Ranworth Antiphoner - a book of daily services with beautiful miniature illustrations that may have been produced by monks of Langley Abbey, near Loddon. It was bequeathed to the Church in 1478. The octagonal font is made of Purbeck marble. Many of the beams in the chancel roof are original, dating back to 1370. The thatched roof was destroyed by fire in 1963 and was replaced with lead. This is a truly beautiful Broadland church - take time to enjoy its beauty and absorb the peaceful atmosphere.

### **Visitors' Centre**

St Helens also has a visitors' centre in a converted coach house. It is open for refreshments from April to October, Monday-Friday (except Good Friday), 10.30am-4.30pm. Saturday and Sunday, 2pm-5pm. During November to March the visitors' centre is only open at weekends.

# Rackheath to Ranworth

## Directions

The tour begins in Rackheath, north east of Norwich. From Norwich take the A1151 Norwich to Wroxham road. After 3½ miles turn left on to Swash Lane signed Rackheath Church. After Church Farm turn left, go straight across and follow the road leading to the first Church we visit on our tour.

- 1 From the church return to the main A1151 Norwich to Wroxham Road and turn left at the junction, towards Wroxham. After 3 miles you will enter Wroxham, crossing the railway bridge.
- 2 Continue for a further ½ mile and turn left signed 'church', opposite the Avenue. Follow the road over the bridge turning right and then left into St Mary's Close to our next church.

- 3 From the church return to the A1151 and at the junction turn right towards Norwich.
  - 4 Shortly before you leave the village turn left signed Salhouse.
  - 5 As you enter Salhouse turn left on the bend beside The Bell public house, signed Lower Street. Continue through Salhouse to Woodbastwick our next church is on the left just past the village green.
  - 6 From the church continue along the same road for almost 2 miles towards Ranworth where the next church is on the left.
- From the church take the road almost opposite signed Panxworth, at the end of this road turn left and then immediately right onto the B1140 and this road will take you back to Norwich.

