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# Wighton: the church, the village and its people, 1400-1500

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Nicholas Andrew Trend

Doctor of Philosophy

University of East Anglia  
School of Art, Media and American Studies (AMA)

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*All Saints, Wighton from the east*

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## *Abstract*

When, how, by whom and in what circumstances were Norfolk's medieval churches rebuilt in the long fifteenth century? Despite the importance of this extraordinary and historic burst of architectural creativity, the answers to these key questions have long proved elusive. A perceived lack of archaeological and documentary evidence has left historians largely in the dark. This thesis addresses the gap in our knowledge by focusing on a single church and village - All Saints in Wighton, near the north coast of the county. The choice of such an apparently narrow subject has allowed a sustained and intense focus on both the fabric of the building and the scattered, partial evidence which survives in the archives. And while the focus has been narrow, the approach taken has been broad and creative. It has included an analysis of masons' marks, the counting of arch voussoirs, an unusually wide, eclectic and exhaustive collation and investigation of surviving documents, together with detailed comparisons with other churches in the vicinity. As such it aims to offer a new model for architectural and social historical research and - hopefully - it will be regarded as a success. The research has identified a reliable chronology for the nave and chancel of All Saints, estimated the cost of its construction and established the most likely model of fundraising needed to raise that money. It has reconstructed the village economy and its community in some detail and identified and profiled the individuals who were most likely to have paid for the project. Lastly, as a consequence of its investigations, it has proposed significant revisions in the date of important stained glass at All Saints and several other Norfolk churches.



*The nave of All Saints, Wighton*

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# *Preface*

*Few of our parochial country churches have any remarks or memorials left of their particular founders, or the time of their building... our ignorance in this case is owing to the great length of time since their foundation, the many alterations and additions that have been made in the churches themselves, and the great disorders and confusions that have happened since the time of their foundation, which have not only defaced and ruined the records and evidences, but even the marble stones and brasses, which would have given us a clear light.*

Francis Blomefield, c. 1750<sup>1</sup>

On a grey September day in 2014 a funeral was held in All Saints church, Wighton, a small village three miles from the north Norfolk coast. The deceased, a man named Dennis Seaman, had been born in Little Walsingham, the next door village, in 1930. He had married a woman from Wighton and had lived there for the rest of his life. He was born before electricity came to the village, when the windmill was still standing, the local school still held classes, and at a time when tractors were rare, much of the land was still worked with horses, the crops were hoed by hand, and harvest was an event requiring the combined efforts of the entire community. In short, he was one of the last surviving villagers to have witnessed life in this part of Norfolk before the widespread industrialisation of agriculture, the growth of consumerism and the pursuit of leisure changed it fundamentally.

Remarkably, he was also a member of the first generation to have witnessed a major reconstruction of the church for more than five centuries. Dennis, who worked in the building trade, had been chairman of the parish council for over 50 years, was church warden for 40 years

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<sup>1</sup> Blomefield 1805-10, vol. 6, 222.

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and served on the Parochial Church Council even longer. He was on the PCC when the medieval tower of All Saints collapsed in 1965 and was one of those who had overseen its reconstruction in 1975-76. This was funded by the near miraculous intervention of a Canadian businessman, Leeds Richardson, who was visiting Wighton to look for the graves of his forbears and, shocked by the stunted state of the tower, determined to pay to have it rebuilt.

In his will, Dennis, a religious man, had asked that his body rest overnight in the nave on the eve of his funeral, a rare throwback to an old tradition. He was buried near the western entrance to the graveyard and, on the day before the service, warm from his work, the gravedigger talked to me volubly of the bones he had unearthed while digging. It was disconcertingly reminiscent of the opening of Act Five of *Hamlet*. There was no Yorick, but among others, he had found a child's skull and he claimed to have dug through two or three earlier burials. Perhaps among those bones were the mortal remains of some of the villagers who, six centuries earlier, had witnessed the transformation of All Saints. It had, like many parish churches in England, been entirely remodelled in the fifteenth century, with a new nave and chancel, much bigger windows and a high clerestory which flooded the building with light.

Little is known about the details of medieval funerals. The service for Dennis Seaman certainly owed much more to the traditions of the Victorian Church of England than to those of the fifteenth-century Church of Rome. But it was part of the same historical continuum and the extremely unusual sight of a full nave, the traditional burial in the graveyard, some 200 or 300 mourners filing out of the porch to witness the committal, and the unearthing of the bones of villagers past, was a rare moment when that continuum was explicitly highlighted.

The funeral came halfway through the research for this thesis and, for me, it confirmed two key instincts which lie behind it. The first is a sense of the physical importance of the church and its graveyard to the history of the village. Wighton is now an insignificant place. Many of its houses are used as holiday accommodation and, typically, barely a dozen people turn out for church services. The time when All Saints was the fulcrum of local life - of birth, death and marriage, of holidays and festivals, of moral instruction and spiritual comfort, of shared values and communal efforts - has all but faded. Very likely the importance of the church to the village will wain further. But for the time being, it remains as the only surviving monument to an era when most people were born, lived and died in the same community and, in the case of Wighton, a time when it was one of the most prosperous and populous villages in the vicinity. The second instinct which inspired this thesis is a desire to reconnect our understanding of the fabric of such buildings with the people who originally constructed and used them. It is a connection which has long been overlooked, but which has proved to be fertile ground - both as a way of understanding a fifteenth-century Norfolk village, and the rebuilding of its church.

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*For Sophie*

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Thanks are also due to the Marquess Townshend and the Earl of Leicester for allowing access to the archives at Raynham Hall and Holkham Hall.

# *Introduction*

Over the last two centuries and more there have been many studies assessing Norfolk's 600 or so medieval parish churches. While these overviews have produced an invaluable amount of comparative data and accounts of stylistic similarities and differences, very few churches have been subject to a detailed individual examination of the means, methods and phases of their construction. Fewer still have been studied in the local social and economic context of the time when they were built, aggrandised or remodelled - despite the fact that this was an expensive, potentially risky and highly-disruptive undertaking. Indeed, the connections between these construction projects and the men and women who commissioned, oversaw and paid for them has been almost entirely lacking in the study of medieval parish churches generally. As a result, even though the long fifteenth century saw perhaps the most sustained and remarkable wave of church reconstruction in English history, we have unearthed hardly anything about those who made it happen. While a stone plaque records the date and the names of the donor, churchwardens and vicar when the tower was rebuilt at Wighton in 1976, nothing has, until now, been known about their counterparts who undertook a similar project 550 years before them. This has left our understanding of medieval churches fundamentally impoverished.

Even if architectural historians were to take an interest in the people behind the churches which are the subject of their study, their research would be hampered by the fact that relatively little progress has also been made in accurately dating the buildings. Studies seldom refer to the years or decades of construction, but instead deploy terms such as Decorated and Perpendicular which denote perceptions of architectural styles which were in vogue for long periods of time. They cannot indicate anything other than a very broad chronology. So, in his great survey of Norfolk architecture, Nikolaus Pevsner categorised many of the county's churches, or individual elements within them, simply as "Perp". As the introduction to the latest, heavily-revised edition of his guide explains, this term may be used to cover buildings of a period from "about 1330

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to the 1570s".<sup>2</sup> If one is trying to trace the development of a building or buildings in detail, such categories have only the most limited of uses. And if we cannot narrow down the date of construction more precisely, then we certainly cannot identify the likely builders and sponsors.

Such imprecision over dates and styles is characteristic of previous assessments of Wighton, the subject of this study, and estimates of the date of the nave of All Saints have ranged across 140 years - from 1330 to 1470. This thesis seeks to address the problem by undertaking a highly detailed investigation. It will deploy an innovative methodology, which includes the study of masons' marks and a close examination of the structure of the nave arcades, to create a tight and reliable chronology of its construction. Having established a secure date for this work, it then undertakes a detailed survey of the eclectic but patchy range of surviving documentation, in an attempt to reveal the nature of the local community and the identity of the individual parishioners who would have commissioned and paid for the work.

Wighton All Saints is an excellent subject for a study seeking more precision and a more detailed social context. It is one of the larger and more impressive churches in North Norfolk and survives as the sole remnant of a once prosperous community which had reached an economic high point in the fifteenth century. Comprising just under 3,000 acres, the parish forms a rough rectangle of nearly three miles by one, with the village settlement situated in the eastern sector.<sup>3</sup> As today, the medieval village was probably formed around two main nuclei on either side of the river - the high ground by the church to the west, and Copy's Green to the east, with a scattering of buildings and mills closer to the river. It is likely that there was also a settlement, as there still is, about a mile to the west of the church at Crabbe's Castle, but there is no evidence to suggest other significant clusters of medieval building anywhere else within the parish boundary. Indeed, the only archaeological remains in the village which stem from the late-medieval period are the foundations of what may have been a moated house and some signs of medieval fish ponds. Both are near the river at what is today called Whey Curd Farm.<sup>4</sup>

Wighton was also the hundredal manor, close to the busy medieval ports of Holkham and Wells, with the river (then, it seems, navigable for small boats)<sup>5</sup> linking it to Blakeney harbour, another major fishing and trading centre. The burgeoning pilgrimage centre of Walsingham, home to the Greyfriars and the Augustinian monks, and Binham with its Benedictine priory, were the other neighbouring villages. This fortunate location, close to thriving ecclesiastical and commercial centres was a major economic advantage: medieval taxation rolls reveal that some of richest men in the hundred came from Wighton and other records indicate that their interests stretched across the locality.

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<sup>2</sup> Pevsner 1997, 56.

<sup>3</sup> The current boundaries of the parish coincide with those extant in 1850 and therefore almost certainly correspond with the medieval parameters.

<sup>4</sup> NHER M2015. The moated house is - probably wrongly - referred to as a chapel on Ordnance Survey maps.

<sup>5</sup> Hoskins 1973, 63.

Wighton was unusual for East Anglia in that it contained one large manor held by a non-resident but aristocratic landlord - the Duchy of Lancaster. The church, meanwhile, was appropriated to the Norwich cathedral priory cellararer, who considered All Saints important enough to appoint its leading mason, James Woderove, to oversee the rebuilding of the chancel in 1440-41, the first in a series of major investments in the cellararer's churches. These jurisdictional connections with the cathedral priory and the Crown have helped ensure that a certain amount of key fifteenth-century documentation referring to both church and manor has survived - from financial accounts and legal transactions to manorial and hundred court records. Though only a partial survival, when combined with the wills of villagers now in the Norfolk Record Office and various deeds, grants and other chance survivals, it offers significant insights into the parishioners, their families and social and economic relations, professions, possessions and landholdings. The church itself is also helpful source of material. Much has been lost - it was subject to several major restorations, most notably the replacement of the nave roof in 1826, Victorian revamps in 1886 (chancel) and 1897 (nave),<sup>6</sup> and the collapse of its tower already mentioned. But key parts of the medieval fabric of All Saints are well-preserved, with significant survivals of fifteenth-century glass and, critically, as we shall see, the profusion of masons' marks on the nave arcades and window reveals.

A close examination of this fabric forms the first part of this thesis, and the methodology employed has enabled the creation of a clear timeline of the church's reconstruction. It has then used this chronology, together with a detailed analysis of the surviving documentation to offer an account of the community and the individual parishioners which would have commissioned and paid for the work some 600 years ago.

## **Plan**

Chapter One considers the wide range of dates assigned to the church by previous historians, and the documentary evidence which helps to date the tower and the chancel. It assesses the fabric and what it can reveal about the way the church was built, and it proposes a new methodology for dating construction work based on matching masons' marks which have been found in churches in the same vicinity, concluding that there is a high probability that the work was undertaken between 1412 and 1420. It then assesses the chancel and the work of the mason, James Woderove, before finally estimating the likely cost of rebuilding the nave. Chapter Two continues the focus on material evidence with a detailed examination of the window reveals and traceries, arguing that variations in design which are identified are indicative of the patronage of several different donors. The extant medieval glass is then surveyed, including more than 100 pieces which were discovered in the church chest and which were almost certainly part of the original glazing scheme. Close attention is given to the construction dates of several churches with similar glass, and as a result, the currently accepted dates of much of that glass are significantly revised.

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<sup>6</sup> NRO FCB/9/7, Kelly 1892 and NRO DN FCB/10.

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With the construction dates, estimated the costs, and suggested a likely model of patronage for the rebuilding work established, Chapter Three reconstructs the social and economic context for the project. It considers changes in social condition, demography, standards of living and disposable income on a national, regional and local scale, and concludes that the work on the nave occurred at a relatively propitious time for the village economically. Wighton was prosperous, and its population - though sharply reduced since the Black Death - was enjoying new social and economic freedoms in the early fifteenth century. This was a time when enterprising peasants, some of whom had only recently arrived in the village, could amass considerable wealth.

The final chapter explores what can be recovered from patchy documentary survivals about the individuals who are most likely to have contributed to, and to have organised the project. Contemporary manor courts reveal that the construction of the nave took place at a time when a corpus of senior men were active in Wighton. They had served as a group and between them held various key manorial offices for an unusually long and continuous period and, as a result, they had accumulated considerable experience working together and running many aspects of the community's affairs. These men would have had the requisite skills and means to undertake, oversee and underwrite the construction work. Four of the most high-profile and proficient parishioners - including the vicar - are identified and their assets and status considered in some detail. A further 20 of significance are also profiled and, finally, four men of significant wealth and a record of generous piety, who lived outside Wighton but had strong connections to the village, are assessed as potential donors.

## **Historiography**

Although the subject of this thesis is tightly-defined, its scope is wide. It covers the histories of Norfolk churches, masons' marks, medieval building techniques, stained glass, the social and economic condition of England and Norfolk between the Black Death and 1500, and a study of the inhabitants of a fifteenth-century village based on documentary sources. As a result, the appropriate historiographies have been addressed in each chapter as they become relevant. There are few comparable in terms of its overall approach. Other studies have examined in detail the genesis and construction of specific buildings - though nearly always those which were of very high status, or were ground-breaking from a structural point of view - and a handful of these have also assessed the motivations of individuals as well as their architectural achievements. Ross King's 2000 narrative of the building of the dome of Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence and - much closer to us in time and place - Witold Rybczynski's 2011 "biography" of the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts here at UEA, are two recent examples of such an approach.<sup>7</sup> However, none have investigated a more humble parish church or attempted to establish the local economic and social context of its construction. Some directly comparable work - which has focused in any detail on both the building of a medieval parish church or churches and the individuals

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<sup>7</sup> King 2000, Rybczynski 2011.

who made them - has been undertaken by Burgess, Heslop, French and Byng but, as will be considered in Chapter Four (p. 132), these studies do not examine the nature of the communities involved in any detail.<sup>8</sup> John Goodall's history of a fifteenth-century alms house, *God's House at Ewelme*, is comparable in approach because it examines the architectural developments of the buildings - including of St Mary's church and the tombs and embellishments of the St John the Baptist chapel - as well as the community of masters, teachers and poor men who lived there. But it is an account of a religious institution rather than of a village and its church.<sup>9</sup>

Other historians who have considered the social and historical context of medieval parish churches, but not individual building campaigns, include Colin Platt, N. G. Pounds and Richard Morris.<sup>10</sup> Eamon Duffy's *Stripping of the Altars* offers an exceptionally detailed account of religious practices in parishes between 1400 and 1580 and considers how churches were used by their priests and parishioners, but not how they were built.<sup>11</sup> Likewise his *Voices of Morebath* is a highly-specific history of religious change in a single Devonshire parish in the sixteenth century, but is not concerned with any major rebuilding of the church.<sup>12</sup> Other accounts of the society of medieval towns and villages include Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's reconstruction of community life in the Pyrenean village of Montaillou - based on detailed records kept in 1308 by Inquisition lawyers investigating alleged heresy<sup>13</sup> - and Anne and Edwin De Windt's detailed insight into medieval society in the small fenland town of Ramsey, which includes a short chapter on the financing of maintenance and minor building projects at the parish church.<sup>14</sup> Frances Gardiner Davenport's *The economic development of a Norfolk manor, 1086-1565*, though a century old, remains an informative model for a documentary reconstruction of the history of a single village - in this case Fornett, south of Norwich.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, Francis Blomefield's mammoth *Essay towards a topographical history of the county of Norfolk*, left unfinished at his death in 1752 and completed by his collaborator Charles Parkin in 1765, must be given due weight.<sup>16</sup> Undertaken nearly three hundred years ago and three centuries after the great fifteenth-century church rebuilding campaigns, Blomefield's and Parkin's efforts continue to inform historians today. In recording inscriptions and heraldry, and summarising medieval (and later) documents and family connections parish by parish and manor by manor, they not only preserved much which would have otherwise been lost, they produced a uniquely-rich account of

<sup>8</sup> Burgess 1996, Heslop 2005, French 2011, Byng 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Goodall 2001.

<sup>10</sup> Platt 1981, Pounds 2008, Morris 1989.

<sup>11</sup> Duffy 1992.

<sup>12</sup> Duffy 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Le Roy Ladurie 1978.

<sup>14</sup> De Windt 2006.

<sup>15</sup> Davenport 1906.

<sup>16</sup> Blomefield 1805-10. This is the standard edition, collected into 11 volumes and reprinted in London 40 years after Parkin's death.

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both the material and social culture of the county, and hundreds of its most important buildings. Though uneven, and focused mainly on the clergy and gentry, it tells us more about the men and women who built Norfolk's churches than any other study past or present. This thesis is heavily indebted to their work.

# *Chapter One*

## *The dating and construction of the fabric*

Before a social context for the rebuilding of Wighton church can be established, we first need to be confident of the date when the work was undertaken. This chapter will address the question by considering the historiography, the evidence provided by contemporary documentary sources and, most particularly, what can be learned from a close examination of the fabric itself. It will further develop an analysis of that material evidence in order to consider the way in which both the nave and the chancel of All Saints were built, the timescale over which construction is likely to have taken place and connections with other contemporary Norfolk churches. Finally, in preparation for an assessment of the affordability of the project, which will be considered in Chapter Four, the relevant documentary and material evidence will be marshalled in order to estimate the likely cost of the rebuilding work.

As has already been noted in the introduction, the dates proposed by previous scholars for the nave at Wighton range over virtually the entire late medieval period - from 1330-1470. In 1936, Claude Messent decided, perspicaciously as it turns out, that the church was built "in the early Perpendicular style". He also surmised that "the tower appears to have belonged to an earlier church, being early fourteenth century in style".<sup>1</sup> In his 1949 guide to Norfolk churches, Munro Cautley awarded All Saints one star ("this fine church is beautifully lit") and referred to its "late 14c arcades".<sup>2</sup> A few years later, in 1962, Pevsner set a date of *c.* 1300 for the tower, based on the style of the doorway and bell openings. Noting the similarities in the design of the piers and capitals at St Peter's, in the neighbouring village of Great Walsingham, he also suggested that the nave arcades were fourteenth century.<sup>3</sup> Presumably having read Pevsner, Mortlock and Roberts also cited the stylistic similarities with Great Walsingham and concluded that "the body of the church is all *c.* 14th and the tower early *c.* 14th".<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Messent 1936, 273. He used the date range 1400-1500 to define the Perpendicular period.

<sup>2</sup> Cautley 1949, 266.

<sup>3</sup> Pevsner. 1962, 343-344.

<sup>4</sup> Mortlock and Roberts 1985, 106-107.

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In 1975, Richard Fawcett's Ph. D. thesis included a detailed study of a series of Norfolk churches which he argued were the work of eleven specific, though mostly unnamed, fourteenth- and fifteenth-century "mason architects".<sup>5</sup> He analysed in detail the work of the masons involved in building Great Walsingham - which he dated to the 1330s or 1340s - and of James Woderove (*fl.* 1415-51) to whom he attributed, for example, the church at Wiveton - about eight miles away from Wighton. Unfortunately, he was not aware of the stylistic links between the nave arcades at Wighton and Great Walsingham, nor the documentary evidence for the involvement of Woderove with Wighton's chancel which will be considered in the next section.

A giant leap forward in dating Norfolk churches was made in 1983 with the publication of Cattermole and Cotton's summary of references to church building in both primary sources - such as wills and monastic accounts - and secondary material such as Francis Blomefield's eighteenth-century survey of Norfolk, already cited in the introduction (p. 13). It was Cattermole and Cotton who turned up the key reference in the cathedral priory cellarar's rolls which linked Wighton to Woderove, as well as several bequests to the fabric, tower and porch of All Saints between 1489 and 1514.<sup>6</sup> The article has also been invaluable throughout this study in helping to date other churches with connections to the reconstruction of All Saints. Despite the emergence of this documentary evidence, Birkin Haward - whose survey and measured drawings of medieval Norfolk church arcades are a useful tool for comparing the design of piers and arch voussoirs - gave an essentially stylistic assessment of the nave at Wighton.<sup>7</sup> Another who was swayed by the similarity of the piers to those at Great Walsingham, he dated the nave arcades of All Saints to around 1330. He does cite Cattermole and Cotton's documentation of the chancel however, and explained the tracery design of the nave windows - which he felt were obviously later than 1330 - by suggesting that they were inserted in about 1460-70. The clerestory, he argued, was added at about the same time.

The second, heavily-revised edition of Pevsner's guide to Norfolk, gives the most detailed account of the church published so far but, while it provides a useful description of some of the architectural features and summarises Cattermole and Cotton's documentary evidence dating the chancel, it refers to the nave only as "Perp".<sup>8</sup> The entry also contains errors. It describes the chancel as "short" - though it is 12.8m in length and one of the longest of any church in the area. And it states that the two-storey porch was "clearly added" to the south aisle. Close inspection suggests not: the stone plinth course which runs along the south side of the church shows that the porch must have been set out - at least up to the height of that course - at the same time as the south wall of the nave.

In short, the specialist literature referring to Wighton church is thin, muddled, unreliable and

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<sup>5</sup> Fawcett 1975.

<sup>6</sup> Cattermole and Cotton 1983.

<sup>7</sup> Haward 1995, 134-136.

<sup>8</sup> Pevsner and Wilson 1997, 724-725.

strewn with errors and assumptions. With the exception of Cattermole and Cotton, who do not attempt to draw detailed conclusions from their evidence, the accounts are generally based on stylistic comparisons and their estimates of dates for the rebuilding of the church are not only vague, but vary from before the Black Death to the latter part of the fifteenth century. To try to narrow this time-frame more precisely, I have used three complementary approaches: documentary sources, visual archaeology and a study of the masons' marks in the nave.

## Documentary sources

The key documents referring to the fabric of Wighton church in the fifteenth century are the account rolls kept by the cellarer of Norwich cathedral priory to whose office All Saints was appropriated.<sup>9</sup> The accounts for 104 financial years between 1284-1531 survive in the Norfolk Record Office, including 52 between 1400 and 1500. Several refer to building work at Wighton church and, most importantly of all, the roll for 1440-41 includes an entry listing the cost of materials, labour, and payments made to the mason James Woderove for building a new chancel. The details of this and other accounts and what they tell us about costs, building techniques and the workforce will be considered at greater length below, but as a reliable source for dating this part of the church, they are rare, precise and invaluable. Since each of the accounts runs from Michaelmas to Michaelmas (September 29) of the years in question, the work paid for in 1440-41 was probably done in the spring and summer of 1441, because the building season, limited by the risk of frost damage to freshly-laid lime mortar, was normally restricted to the period between April and October. However, most of the work referred to in the roll involves stone cutting, demolition and the transport of materials, so it is possible that this might have been done in the autumn or winter of 1440 as preparatory work prior to construction in the spring. The reference to "demolishing old walls" suggests that at least part of the old chancel was still standing when Woderove arrived on the site.

While this account marks the first year of work on the new chancel, there must have been more expenditure on the walls and window tracery in subsequent years. At least two more seasons of construction work would have been needed because the chancel could not have been completed to its full height in only one phase - rubble walls constructed with lime mortar can be raised only to a height of about 3.5m each year. However, the project is not mentioned in the cellarer's rolls for the next two years - nor in 1446-47 and 1447-48 - and the rolls between these dates are lost. So, assuming the cellarer did fund the rest of the work, it must have been paid for during those lost years of 1443-46 and/or 1448-49. After that, in 1449-50, a part payment of a total bill of £16 for making the new chancel roof was made to the carpenter, William Bishop.<sup>10</sup> The rest of this payment is not recorded, but was probably settled in the following year (1450-51) for which the roll has not survived. It may either be an advance payment for materials - and perhaps also for preparatory work on cutting joints - or, possibly, the final installment - which would suggest

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<sup>9</sup> Dodwell 1985, 53.

<sup>10</sup> NRO DCN 1/2/59.

**Table 1: Norwich cathedral priory cellarer's rolls, expenditure on Wighton chancel**

<b>Accounts</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>NRO reference</b>
1440-41	£20 15s 1/2d for chancel demolition and rebuilding work	DCN 1/2/54
1441-42	No expenditure on church	DCN 1/2/55
1442-43	No expenditure on church	DCN 1/2/56
1443-44	Roll missing	
1444-45	Roll missing	
1445-46	Roll missing	
1446-47	No expenditure on church	DCN 1/2/57
1447-48	No expenditure on church	DCN 1/2/58
1448-49	Roll missing	
1449-50	Part payment of £7 6s for the new chancel roof	DCN 1/2/59
1450-51	Roll missing	
1451-52	No expenditure on church	DCN 1/2/60
1452-53	Roll missing	
1453-54	Roll missing	
1454-55	Roll missing	
1455-56	£4 10s to glazing two chancel windows	DCN 1/2/61/61B
1456-57	12s to raise and tile chancel floor	DCN 1/2/62
1457-58	No expenditure on church	DCN 1/2/63
1458-59	No expenditure on church	DCN 1/2/64
1459-60	Roll missing	
1460-61	Roll missing	
1461-62	Roll missing	
1462-63	Roll missing	
1463-64	Roll missing	
1464-65	No expenditure on church	DCN 1/2/65
1465-66	No expenditure on church	DCN 1/2/66
1466-67	Roll missing	
1467-68	Roll missing	
1468-69	No expenditure on church	DCN 1/2/67
1469-70	10s spent on floor and wall tiles for chancel	DCN 1/2/68

that work was finished. The rolls for the year before are missing, nothing is noted in 1451-52 and the accounts for the next three years have also been lost. The 1455-56 accounts included the cost of glazing two chancel windows (£4 10s),<sup>11</sup> and the following year recorded spending on raising the chancel floor (12s) and for floor tiles.<sup>12</sup> The final relevant entry is in 1469-70 when 10s was spent on more floor tiles for the chancel and wall tiles for the new altar.<sup>13</sup> These details sound like finishing touches, although the accounts are missing for four of the next ten years, so it is possible that work may have dragged on later than this.

<sup>11</sup> NRO DCN 1/2/61A and 1/2/61B.

<sup>12</sup> NRO DCN 1/2/62.

<sup>13</sup> NRO DCN 1/2/68.

**Table 2: Specific and significant bequests to the fabric of Wighton church before 1515**

Date of probate	Villager	Sum bequeathed	Conditions attached
1483	Robert King	40s	reparation of the church
1484	Sir Edmund Wyghton	3s 4d	use of church works
1486	John Gloys	20s	reparation of the church
1489	Robert Creke	33s 4d	reparation of the bell
1491	Alan Wyllyamsone	40s	building new pinnacles of the tower
1491	Thomas Tyrle	6s 8d	reparation of new pinnacles of the tower
1491	Alan Dobydo	1 quarter of malt (approx 4s)	for the new bell
1493	Cecilia Dobido (?wife of Alan)	3s 4d	reparation of the church
1494	Helena Creke (wife of Robert)	20s	reparation of the church
1494	Robert Fysher	13s 4d and 6s 8d	first sum to building tower, second to building south porch
1496	William Feke	8 marks (£5 6s 8d)	repair of the church or the tower
1497	William Ringstead	6s 8d and 10s	building porch and to be buried in the porch; the 10s is for maintenance ( <i>sustent</i> )
1498	Margaret Hill	10s	maintenance ( <i>sustent</i> ) of the church
1514	Robert Whelpe	12d	to middle bell

The rolls thus give a clear time-frame which is summarised in Table 1 (left). It begins with the demolition of the old chancel in 1440-41, followed by the commencement (or possibly the completion) of work on the roof nine years later, the installation of window glazing in 1455-56 and finally the decoration of the new altar 29 years after work began. The implications of this long time-frame will be discussed further (pp. 29-30); it may reflect financial constraints - though the cellarer's accounts show a healthy credit balance between 1440 and 1460<sup>14</sup> - or it may be that Woderove and his masons were needed elsewhere and had to put the work at Wighton on hold.

The other key primary sources relating to the church fabric are the wills of Wighton villagers who died during the fifteenth and early sixteenth century. Most of these bequeath small sums (usually 12d) to the fabric and/or the high altar of the church and often to one or more of the parish guilds.<sup>15</sup> But some legacies are quite substantial and, between 1489 and 1514 in particular, there is a clutch of bigger and more specific bequests made to add "pinnacles" to the tower, to build the south porch and for a new bell or bells (see Table 2, above).<sup>16</sup> These clearly suggest that a final campaign was underway during the 1480s and 1490s - either to complete the rebuilding of the church, or to further embellish it. But they also reveal the limitations and ambiguities of this type of documentary source. That plans for the porch existed many decades before 1494 and that the tower was built much earlier, becomes clear from an analysis of the church fabric.

<sup>14</sup> Saunders 1930, 167.

<sup>15</sup> See p. 135.

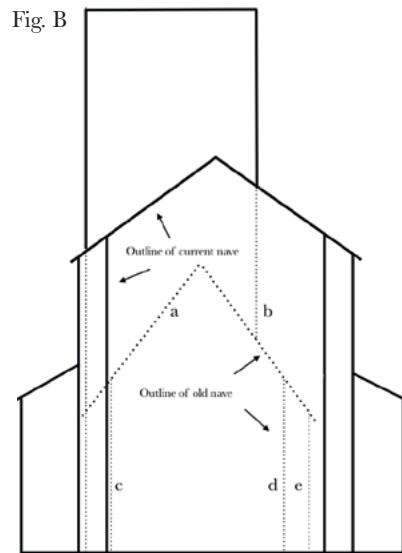
<sup>16</sup> Cattermole and Cotton 1983. The wills are listed in the bibliography pp. 178-179.

## Visual archaeology

While there are contemporary documents which prove that the chancel was rebuilt from 1440-41, there are none to help date the nave or the main body of the tower. That these were constructed at different times is evident from looking at the exterior of the west gable of the nave on the north side of the tower, where a diagonal course of flints rises from the end of a vertical panel of flint-work about 4.05m high and meets the tower at a height of 6.9m (see Fig. A, right). It is a clear indication of the old roof-line of a smaller, lower nave rising from the top of an earlier north wall from a narrower church. We can also see that the earlier nave was built before the tower because, below the peak of the old roof-line, the flints of the tower are laid against the nave wall. That nave was then extended after the tower was built is apparent because, above the peak, the nave wall flints lie against the tower. So the new, higher and wider gable end was clearly constructed on top of the earlier one, so abutting the tower.

In September 2015, restoration work on the interior of the west wall of the nave provided an opportunity to confirm this chronology. All the original plaster was removed from the wall and this exposed a stone drip mould from the earlier roof-line (line *a* in Fig. B, right), the quoins from the north-east corner of the tower (*b*) and three clear vertical joints in the flint-work from floor level upwards (*c*, *d* & *e*). The roof-line and position of the quoins coincided with the traces just cited on the exterior of the west wall, north of the tower. Joint *c* was 28cm inside the line of the south arcade and marks the inside of the south wall of an earlier nave (the outside line of the wall is not visible because it is covered by the engaged pier of the current arcade). Joints *d* & *e*, 50cm apart, marked the stub end of the original north wall. As Fig. A demonstrates, these traces provide a clear guide to the outline of the original nave, which had an internal width of just under 6m (about 1.5m narrower than the width between the present arcades). The height to the inside eaves was also about 6m - almost certainly too low for either a clerestory or aisles - and the measurement from the floor to the apex was about 10.5m, roughly the same as the height to the underside of the current chancel arch. That it must have been similar in length to, or perhaps slightly shorter than the new nave is confirmed by the fact that the cellarer's account refers to the demolition of the old chancel, so the replacement building must have left at least part of the original chancel still standing. Thus the old nave would have been a relatively long and narrow hall and the original chancel must have been relatively narrow too - no wider than the 6m nave. This is consistent with the proportions of the thirteenth-century chancel which still exists at South Creake, some seven miles away, which is 6.01m wide.

The restoration work also provided further evidence to confirm that the tower was built onto the end of the earlier nave because the drip mould - which was left exposed when the wall was re-plastered in 2015 (see picture, right) - can be seen to have been laid on an even plane rather than being inserted into flint work of an existing flint wall. The explanation for this is that when the stone (or possibly timber) copings which originally protected the top of the gable were removed, an even bed was exposed. The stone drip mould which was to cover the



*Fig. A: the trace of the old roof-line is still visible on the west wall of the nave. Below the arrow the flints of the tower are laid against the nave wall; above it, the nave wall flints lie against the tower. This indicates that the tower was built against the earlier nave, but before the later one. Above centre: the fifteenth century plaster was removed from the west wall of the nave in 2015 exposing the drip moulds of the earlier nave roof, and the quoins of the tower. This allowed a scale drawing of the elevation (fig. B) to be made plotting the relative sizes of the old and new naves (NB: the aisles and tower in this drawing are not to scale). The quoins and drip mould were left exposed when the wall was re-plastered (above right).*

joint between the roof of the old nave and the east wall of the new tower was laid upon this conveniently smooth bed and the upper wall of the tower was then constructed directly on top of the moulding. When the new nave was built, the moulding was hacked flush with the flint-work - the scars from this process are still visible in the stone. Also visible when the old plaster was removed were traces of the shape of the roof timbers from the original nave. These revealed outlines consistent with a scissor-braced roof - “a prestigious form, appearing in churches of the 13th-15th centuries”.<sup>17</sup> There is no way of accurately dating the old nave. The church was certainly in existence before 1205 when it was granted to Norwich cathedral priory<sup>18</sup> and the nave must be older than the tower, which was probably built about 1300 (if we allow that date, which is based only on the style of the stonework of the tower door - see p. 23).<sup>19</sup> For reasons which aren’t clear, the tower was set south of the centre line of the nave, so that its south wall aligned with that of the nave. This is unusual in Norfolk medieval churches,<sup>20</sup> however both St Mary Magdalene at Warham (two miles away) and St Mary the Virgin at Great Snoring (five miles from Wighton) employ this arrangement. As can also be seen from Fig. B - and as will be discussed later in this chapter (p. 37) - it meant that the new south arcade could be built along the line of the south wall of the old nave which, if it was demolished progressively as the arcade was constructed, would have helped with supporting the new arches.

<sup>17</sup> Pevsner and Wilson 1999, 92.

<sup>18</sup> Dodwell 1985, 53.

<sup>19</sup> Pevsner. 1962, 343-344.

<sup>20</sup> Wighton is one of only four out of 50 Norfolk churches surveyed by Birkin Haward with an offset west tower. The others are Diddlington, St Nicholas Lynn and Walpole St Peter (the latter two were both projects on which Wighton masons worked - see below). Birkin Haward 1995.

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The north arcade meanwhile was built about 50cm outside the line of the old north wall. This may have been just enough room for it to have been constructed without demolishing the wall first - although the 80 or so pieces of broken stone tracery, which are clearly visible incorporated into the flint-work above the north aisle windows, most likely come from windows of the old church, so the old north wall was probably demolished before the new one was constructed.

As well as confirming the chronology of the old and new naves and the tower, the physical evidence also indicates that the new nave must have been in place before the chancel was built. The coursing of the flints where the chancel is joined to the east half-gables on either side of the nave clearly indicates this. The peak of the new chancel roof is also slightly higher than that of the old nave and it would have created all sorts of complications to have built this before the new nave had been constructed. What is more, the same masons' marks on the chancel arch piers are also found on the nave arcade piers (see p. 33) which strongly suggests it was this team of masons, not James Woderove's, which built the chancel arch. This chronology also makes sense because, before the cathedral cellararer agreed to pay for a new chancel, he would certainly have wanted to be sure that the parish had been able to complete its ambitious project for a new nave. Obviously, in their turn, the parishioners would have needed to extract a commitment from the priory to replace the old chancel before they sank funds into rebuilding the nave. But, as we shall see (p. 42 and p. 134 *ff*), the funding arrangements were more of a challenge for the parishioners than for the cellararer, so the latter was the more in need of reassurance.

So, if it is clear from the evidence of the fabric and the cellararer's rolls that the old nave was demolished and replaced with a new one sometime before 1440-41, how does this square with the legacies left to the "building of the tower" in 1491 and its "new pinnacles" in 1494, and the porch in 1494 and 1497 (see Table 2, p. 19)? The porch certainly seems to have been part of the original plan for the nave because, as has already been noted, the stone plinth course, which runs along the entire south wall of the nave from the point where it meets the chancel to the south wall of the tower, also encompasses and is integral with, the porch. The explanation must be that either the porch was left unfinished for many years, or a decision to add a second storey was made in the 1490s. Whichever is the case, it was apparently never finished as once planned since bosses with springing points for stone vaulting were placed above the windows, but that vaulting was never installed.

As for the tower, the medieval fabric is largely lost. After the collapse of the west wall on November 27, 1965, much of what remained above the nave roof-line was demolished. The structure was then stabilised on a concrete frame and rebuilt in the 1970s. In fact only the original base, the west door opening and some of the medieval flint-work below the level of the nave roof - including the access stairs - remain. While there is no documentary or other evidence to date the original tower, previous commentators who saw it before the collapse have been much more consistent in dating it on stylistic grounds than they have been when assessing the nave. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, before the tower fell, the fairly simple,

unbuttressed structure, with its Y-tracery and the bell-capitals of the shafts framing the west door, suggested a date of about 1300 to Pevsner and early fourteenth century to Mortlock and Roberts, for example. Apart from a few later embellishments, it displays none of the characteristic architectural exuberance which distinguishes later fourteenth- and fifteenth-century church towers in Norfolk.<sup>21</sup> So it is these embellishments at the top of the tower which must account for the late fifteenth-century bequests. There is no evidence of pinnacles on the old tower, so either the plans were abandoned, or the legacies are actually referring to the addition of battlements. Architectural adornments of this kind were common - six miles away at Burnham Market, a panelled and crenellated parapet bearing the arms of the manorial lord, William Lexham (d. 1500), as well as those of the Calthorpes was added at about the same time.<sup>22</sup> Photographs of the Wighton tower before it collapsed (pp. 208-209) show flush-work and three heraldic shields around battlements on each side - presumably there were 12 in all, though no images exist of the north side. In the 1880s, Farrer found only two shields were still legible and both bore the same royal coat of arms.<sup>23</sup> One of these, together with four blank shields, was rescued and remounted above the west tower door. The heraldry was clearly added in the fifteenth century, since the arms are in the form adopted by Henry IV and V from 1406-1422 and re-adopted by Edward IV in 1461. They remained the same until 1554, except during Henry VI's brief return to the throne in 1470-71, and are therefore consistent with the addition of battlements in the 1490s. So, in the absence of other evidence, a date in the early fourteenth century for the main structure of the original tower and the 1490s for the addition of the battlements is an uncontroversial estimate which squares with the building chronology already established.

We can thus be confident from documentary sources and an examination of the fabric, that the current nave was built later than the tower and earlier than the chancel; but how much earlier? Did the parishioners live with a partially boarded-up chancel arch for decades, or did the cellarer build the chancel as soon as the nave was finished? Pevsner's observation that the piers of the Wighton nave arcade are very close in design to those at Great Walsingham and so must be from the fourteenth century, needs to be addressed at this point, though first it is necessary to be confident of the date of Great Walsingham. There is no documentary evidence, but the window tracery at St Peter's, some of the surviving glass and the design of the clerestory certainly appear consistent with styles common in the fourteenth century. The most detailed study of the church, by Richard Fawcett, confirms this.<sup>24</sup> He draws convincing parallels between the tracery, pier and moulding designs in nine Norfolk churches, including Great Walsingham, which he argues must be the work of a single mason, or team of masons using the same templates. For example, the arcade arches, capitals, pier shafts and pier bases at Great Walsingham are virtually identical both in profile and dimensions, to those at St Mary's, Beeston-next-Mileham. Taken as a group,

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<sup>21</sup> Summers 2011.

<sup>22</sup> Pevsner 1999, 227.

<sup>23</sup> Farrer 1887, 372.

<sup>24</sup> Fawcett 1980 and Fawcett 1975, 157-192.

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he argues, these churches must have been built during the 1330s and 1340s.

The only account which suggests a different chronology is Bill Wilson's analysis in the second edition of Pevsner.<sup>25</sup> Without referring to Fawcett's work (except in the further reading list in his introduction), he concludes, on stylistic grounds, that the capitals of the arcade piers at Great Walsingham and those of the chancel and tower arches, are "undoubtedly Perp, and are very close in style to those at Wighton, yet the windows are just as clearly Dec, suggesting that the church was raised in the C15 and given a new arcade within the existing aisles".<sup>26</sup> Such an explanation must be discounted. It requires us to believe that an older arcade was taken down and a new one inserted in its place. The new one could only have been marginally higher because a glance at the former roof-line of the now-demolished chancel, which is clearly indicated on the exterior of the east wall of the nave, shows that it peaked only five feet or so below that of the current nave. According to Wilson's logic, the original clerestory windows (which are surely contemporary with the aisle windows) must then have been re-installed above the new arcade. In short, this proposed remodelling would have required a huge amount of work for virtually no benefit.<sup>27</sup> The Great Walsingham arcade must be fourteenth century, and Fawcett's dates of 1330-50, secure.

Must it then follow that the Wighton arcade is contemporary with St Peter's? While the section of the Wighton piers is identical in design, they are much more substantial (a full 18cm wider) than the Great Walsingham shafts. So, unlike those at Beeston-next-Mileham, they were not made from the same mason's template. Also, while all the details of the Beeston arcade are identical to those at Walsingham, the polygonal capitals at Wighton are slightly different, and the profile of the arches is of an entirely different design. Neither are the pier bases comparable - they are 84cm high at Wighton (more typical of the fifteenth century), while those at Walsingham and Beeston are only 51cm high (more typical of the fourteenth century) and of a much more complicated design. It might be objected that some of the drums of the Wighton arcade piers might indeed date from the fourteenth century. Perhaps they were dismantled and re-used, together with a batch of new ones made to the same pattern, when the arcade was raised. On the surface, this is a feasible explanation, especially since the arcade is built from two different types of stone - a coarser pink and a smoother yellow variety. But, as we have seen, the roof-line the earlier church was too low to accommodate an arcade, and the possibility that drums were re-used is further undermined by the distribution of the masons' marks. These suggest that the same team of masons worked on both types of stone. Since, as we shall see, the marks almost certainly indicated which mason had cut the stone (they were made prior to the laying of the sections), it is extremely unlikely that later masons would have re-marked the old drums. The most probable explanation for the similarity of the pier design is not that Wighton was built at the same date as Walsingham and Beeston, but that the patrons of the building work at Wighton decided that they liked the design of the piers in their neighbouring village and asked for a larger copy with

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<sup>25</sup> Pevsner and Wilson 1997, 485-486.

<sup>26</sup> Pevsner and Wilson 1997, 486.

<sup>27</sup> What does seem to have happened in the fifteenth century at Great Walsingham from a structural point of view is that the nave roof was replaced and a new south porch added.

a more fashionable take on the capitals, arch mouldings and bases. In short, there is no reason that we should be distracted into assuming that the Wighton arcade was built in the fourteenth century. Indeed, the evidence of the masons' marks points conclusively to a later date.

## The masons' marks

The nave of Wighton All Saints is inscribed with an unusually large number of masons' marks. In all, there are some 200 examples of 14 different devices inscribed on the dressed stone of the piers of the nave, the arcade arches, the chancel arch piers, the window reveals of the north aisle and the north and south clerestories.<sup>28</sup> (Some examples are illustrated on pp. 212-213). What do these marks indicate? Today, practising masons have their own personal mark with which they identify the blocks they have carved and shaped and this tradition of individualised marks can be traced back to at least 1558.<sup>29</sup> Before that, we can't be absolutely sure why or how they were made. The broad academic consensus however, is that such marks were always made as the "signatures" of individual masons - "banker" marks inscribed at the work bench<sup>30</sup> on completion of cutting or honing the stone so that the quality and/or number of blocks produced by that mason could be monitored.<sup>31</sup> They appear to be related to merchants' marks and are part of a European-wide tradition of stone marking dating back at least to Roman times.<sup>32</sup>

Many questions about their use and significance in medieval England remain unanswered, however. It is not certain why some stones, or some parts of a building, are marked and others are not. The inconsistency is probably the result of different payment systems - a jobbing mason on a short term contract having to make his mark in order to claim payment. So, the fact that there are no marks in the chancel, nor in the south windows of the nave at Wighton, for example, suggests that these were made by masons working under a different supervision or payment system from those that built the nave arcades and other window tracery. The fact that not all the nave arcade stones appear to have been marked may be explained by the fact that some marks were made are on the faces which were hidden in the construction process.<sup>33</sup> Marks have

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<sup>28</sup> There are also two further marks - one on either side of the tower door - but these must date from the earlier tower building campaign. There are apparently no surviving marks in the chancel, nor on the chancel arch voussoirs.

<sup>29</sup> Cooper 2006, 71 cites the earliest documented reference in the minute book of a Scottish masons' lodge of that year.

<sup>30</sup> *Banc* in French, hence "banker".

<sup>31</sup> See for example Coulton 1949, Knoop and Jones 1933, Salzman 1952, Davis 1954 and Alexander 2008.

<sup>32</sup> Girling 1964, 9. Merchants' marks were also unique to individuals.

<sup>33</sup> Jennifer Alexander's interpretation, suggested to me in correspondence, is that the proportion of stone sections marks is indicative of the number of exposed surfaces and the type of work done. "1:5 is the rule of thumb for occurrences of marks, based on the number of faces on which a mark can be made on the block, so that in a totally random order 1 in 6 stones will be marked. Any departure from this shows a controlled situation. No marks either means that only joint faces, or beds, are marked, which is the current situation with marks in the modern period, or it means that masons are on wages. Any number greater than 1 in 6 suggests that the masons are being instructed to make their marks visible". Her ratios obviously have to be adapted to different cases. An arch voussoir, for example may have three of six faces exposed after installation. And, arguably, a pier section has only three faces, two of which are hidden. If these ratios are applied in Wighton, the proportion of exposed/hidden faces to visible marks is consistent with all stones being marked, with some exposed and the rest hidden. Almost exactly half (115 out of 328) of the voussoirs are marked, while marks are visible on about one third (53/151) of the main pier sections.

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certainly been found on the embedded surfaces of ruined or dismantled medieval buildings.<sup>34</sup>

Another key issue is how reliably an individual mason can be associated with a particular mark. It is possible that masons were inconsistent in the way they made their marks, that they changed them over time and that perhaps apprentices used their master's mark until they completed their training. All authorities also warn against the unquestioning assumption that the same mark appearing on two different buildings must mean that the same mason had been at work on both. There are numerous examples of apparently identical marks appearing on buildings separated in both time and space - often hundreds of miles and hundreds of years apart. However, when the same mark is found in relatively close geographical proximity, in churches where there are documentary or other good reasons to assume they were built within, say twenty or thirty years of each other, it seems reasonable to conclude that matching marks are a strong indicator that the same man was at work.<sup>35</sup> After all, these churches were built by masons and a mason in his working life must have worked on a dozen or more sites, many of which would have been relatively local to each other. In such situations it is surely much more likely that two identical marks represent the inscription of same mason, rather than two different masons using the same distinctive sign in nearby churches at around the same time. When groups of the same marks appear in these circumstances, the argument is even more compelling. This is certainly the case at Wighton, where half of the marks on the nave arcades can be matched with examples at 10 other churches of similar dates. As Table 3 (right) and Map 1 (p. 206) demonstrate, all these churches also fall within a 30-mile radius of King's Lynn: All Saints, East Winch; St Nicholas chapel, King's Lynn; St Margaret's, King's Lynn; All Saints, Litcham; St Peter's, Weasenham; St Martin's, Fincham; St Peter's, Walpole; and St Edmund's, Emneth - all in Norfolk - and Crowland Abbey in Lincolnshire.

Some of the marks were recorded in notes and analysis made by G. G. Coulton during the 1930s and R. H. C. Davis during the 1950s.<sup>36</sup> With the exception of references to those at St Mary's, Little Walsingham (which burned down in 1961 and has been rebuilt since), I have verified the existence of the marks which they recorded, found some that were missed, and also discovered the other matches at Wighton, Fincham, Weasenham, Emneth and Crowland. The most significant finds are at St Nicholas chapel, Lynn. As Table 3 also shows, nine of the 15 masons who inscribed their marks on this, arguably the most ambitious building project in Britain of its time, also worked on at least one of ten other churches. For example, three of the St Nicholas masons worked at Wighton, four at East Winch, four at Litcham, three at St Margaret's, Lynn, and three at Little Walsingham. There are other significant overlaps. Of the masons who cut the stones at Wighton, six worked

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<sup>34</sup> Notes by a nineteenth/twentieth century Norwich mason, R. H. Flood - who took an interest in the subject - record marks that he found on embedded surfaces when doing restoration work on the tower of St Peter Mancroft in 1895. His archive also includes copies of four different marks found on dismantled stones at Walsingham Friary in 1932: "They were all on the top bed of the stones" NRO MC630/199.

<sup>35</sup> R. H. C. Davis argued this point and established what he called "approved connections" where links of date and geography made it likely the mark was the work of the same mason in two different buildings: Davis 1954, 43-50.

<sup>36</sup> Coulton 1949, Davis 1954, 43-76.

**Table 3: Matching masons' marks in churches within 30 miles of King's Lynn**

at East Winch, two at Little Walsingham and two at Walpole St Peter. This is a very valuable set of data because there is documentary and other evidence - summarised in Appendix One (p. 194) - which helps fix the date of six of the churches (or their relevant constituent parts) within the period 1400-1440. This is consistent with the working life of a single generation of masons and clearly suggests that the St Nicholas chapel was the earliest of the 11 related construction projects. We can conclude from this that during the building of the chapel, the town must have been a centre of masonic excellence from which workers migrated to other sites in the region, at first apparently in groups of four. Then in later years - as their colleagues died, they moved elsewhere or were recruited as individuals - in threes, twos and ones.

In the case of Wighton church, it is possible to take the dating evidence a step further. Six masons at Wighton also made their marks at East Winch, for which there is documentary evidence to suggest rebuilding work was in progress in 1416. A calculation can therefore be constructed to extrapolate from this a statistically reliable date range for the work at Wighton. To make such a calculation, it is necessary to estimate the length of time over which the identified craftsmen are likely to have worked together and for this we need to know the longevity of masons in the fifteenth century. There is no convenient evidence to help us establish this. Average life expectancy of the population seems to have been around 30 years - but this is measured from birth and, generally, data on

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mortality during the period are, as John Hatcher puts it, “sparse and intractable... hard to win and treacherous to interpret”.<sup>37</sup> How long a skilled craftsman, who started work as an apprentice at age 14, might continue to work and to make his mark is particularly difficult to gauge. As the records of a succession of senior masons employed by the cathedral priory in Norwich demonstrate, there is no doubt that some enjoyed a long working life. James Woderove himself worked for at least 36 years - from before 1415 to 1451, John Everard for 45 years between 1440 and 1485, and John Antell for at least 26 years and probably longer - from perhaps 1459 until at least 1485.<sup>38</sup>

Calculations made by L. R. Poos in a study based on leet court records of boys who reached the age of compulsory tithing membership (12 years) found a mean e12 (life expectancy aged 12) of 39.7. This, which produced an average age at death of about 52, was based on a sample size of 110 from three villages in Essex - all the men were born between 1351 and 1500 and prosperous enough to be registered as tenants.<sup>39</sup> But it probably exaggerated longevity because, among others who have to be excluded, those who died in their teens were not recorded and so cannot be included in the figures. Other valuable data come from Hatcher’s analysis of monastic records of Christ Church Canterbury which detail the lives and deaths of 414 monks from 1395-1505.<sup>40</sup> This has been supplemented by Barbara Harvey’s work on the monks in Westminster at around the same time, and Hatcher’s more recent collaborative study of the monks at Durham.<sup>41</sup> Although not representative of the population at large, the data from these studies of monastic life and death have at least some relevance to what might be expected for masons, another all-male sample. All three studies point to a life expectancy (e25) of the cohorts of 25-year-old monks entering the monasteries between 1395 and 1474 of 25.7 years at Westminster, 27.4 years at Canterbury and 29.5 years at Durham.

Of course, monks lived in favourable conditions, were well fed, well-clothed, had access to relatively fresh water and good medical care. On the downside, they were probably more vulnerable to contagious diseases such as tuberculosis. Masons would have been physically strong, reasonably well-paid and well-fed, but more prone to accidental death. After all, part of the job involved the risks of working at height and manoeuvering heavy weights from hurdle platforms. In short, there are many variables, but I have made my calculations based on an estimated average working life of 30 years after the age of 18 - which probably errs on the longer and so, from a statistical point of view, the safer side. From this, a calculation can be made which estimates the chances of six masons remaining alive and working together for a certain number of years.<sup>42</sup> The accuracy of this calculation depends on particular assumptions which are

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<sup>37</sup> Hatcher 1986, 22.

<sup>38</sup> Harvey 1984.

<sup>39</sup> Poos 1991, 115-120.

<sup>40</sup> Hatcher 1986.

<sup>41</sup> Harvey 1995 and Hatcher, Piper and Stone 2006.

<sup>42</sup> For these purposes, working together means working on the same project. They weren’t necessarily on site at the same time, but they were working on the same building campaign.

impossible to verify, such as the fact that the ages of the masons were randomly distributed.<sup>43</sup> But some of the premises are very conservative - the assumption, for example, that the only reason they would have stopped working together was death. In reality, there may have been lots of other reasons why they may not have continued to work as a team or on the same projects. With all this taken into account, the statistical likelihood of six masons still being alive and able to work together over different time spans can be calculated using a standard probability formula.<sup>44</sup> This produces a probability of 0.18 - or 18 per cent - that one of the six would die in the first year they worked together, then 34 per cent by the second year and increasing each further year to 47 per cent, 58 per cent, 67 per cent, 74 per cent, 80 per cent until the eighth year when the probability of one of the masons having died reaches 84 per cent.

Because it is known that the same six masons worked together at both Wighton and East Winch, but not which church they worked on first, the documentary evidence for East Winch (1416) must be used as a central point when calculating the likely spread of dates when the six masons would have worked together. So, for example, there is a 58 per cent probability that all the masons survived and worked together for up to four years, which would mean a 58 per cent probability that the Wighton nave was built between 1414 and 1418 - a four-year spread around 1416. For the purposes of this thesis, the strong - 84 per cent - probability that one of the masons would have died over an eight year period seems a sensibly conservative probability to apply and confirms a time-frame of 1412-1420 for the building of the nave arcades (the parts of the two churches where the six marks are found). Granted, the documentary evidence dating East Winch isn't conclusive, but the three matching marks at St Nicholas, Lynn (c. 1400-1410), the two at Walpole St Peter (1423 or earlier) and one at Litcham (consecrated 1412), as well as the matches on other churches which would be consistent with these dates, can only increase confidence that a date for Wighton in the 1410s is very secure.

Technically, of course, the marks only give us the date when the stones were cut, and therefore the beginning of the project. It is likely to have taken several years to complete: as we have seen, there were at least nine years between the commencement of work on the new chancel and the roof going on. How common was such a protracted time-frame? From what patchy evidence we have, there is little consistency in the length of time it took to complete medieval building campaigns. Many were lengthy projects. Not only do we know that it took nine years to construct the Wighton

<sup>43</sup> The assumptions used in the calculation were as follows:

1. Masons had an average working life of 30 years after they had been granted their mark post-apprenticeship (ages 18-48).
2. Each mason made his own mark (though if an apprentice made his master's mark until age 18, that wouldn't make any difference to the calculation).
3. That the only reason masons might cease to work together was death (as opposed to moving to a different location or lodge for example) - another generous assumption.
4. That the ages of the six masons were randomly distributed between 18 and 48.
5. That the marks at each church were all made in the one year. Given that they are made mostly on arcade piers and arches, this is certainly possible, but the time spread may have been a little longer.

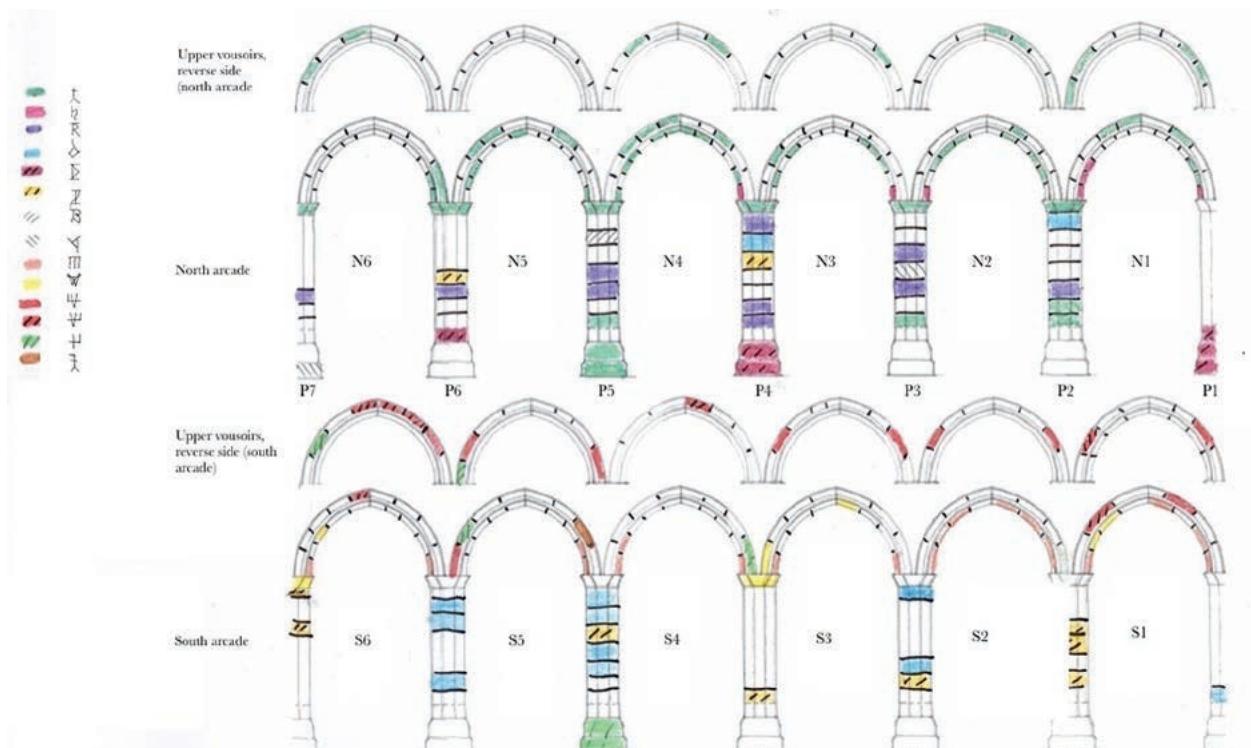
<sup>44</sup> The formula is:  $\text{Pr}(\text{at least one of the six dies}) = 1 - \text{Pr}(\text{none of them dies})$   
 $= 1 - (29/30)^6$   
 $= 1 - 0.82$   
 $= 0.18$

For more than two years, the calculation is adjusted to  $(28/30)$  and so on. I'm grateful to Gillian Butler, former tutor in mathematics at the London School of Economics, for guidance on this calculation. Note: Pr stands for probability.

**Table 4: The distribution of masons' marks on the nave arcades at Wighton**

<b>North arcade</b>							
<b>Arch number</b>		<b>N6</b>	<b>N5</b>	<b>N4</b>	<b>N3</b>	<b>N2</b>	<b>N1</b>
Upper voussoirs		†	†	†	†	†	†
Lower voussoirs		†	†	† h	† h	† h	† h
<b>Pier number</b>							
<b>Pier number</b>	<b>P7</b>	<b>P6</b>	<b>P5</b>	<b>P4</b>	<b>P3</b>	<b>P2</b>	<b>P1</b>
Pier capitals	†	†	†	†	†	†	
Pier base and drums	Y R	Σ R Z	Δ R B	Σ R Z B	Δ R Y	Δ R B	Σ
<b>South arcade</b>							
<b>Arch number</b>		<b>S6</b>	<b>S5</b>	<b>S4</b>	<b>S3</b>	<b>S2</b>	<b>S1</b>
Upper voussoirs		Ψ Ψ +	Ψ + Ψ	Ψ +	Ψ +	Ψ	Ψ Ψ
Lower voussoirs		Π Π	Π	Π	Π Π	Π	Π Π
<b>Pier number</b>	<b>P7</b>	<b>P6</b>	<b>P5</b>	<b>P4</b>	<b>P3</b>	<b>P2</b>	<b>P1</b>
Pier capitals	Ψ		Δ	Ψ			
Pier base and drums	Z	Δ	Z Δ +	Z	Z Δ	Z	Δ

N = north, S = south. Numbering is from east to west.



*Fig. C (above) shows the information summarised in Table 4, but in graphic form. Each mark has been given a colour code (see legend). Unmarked pier drums have not been delineated. Numbering is from the east, as in the table.*

chancel, but the cellarer's rolls suggest that construction of the new chancel at Martham started in 1456 and wasn't completed until 1469.<sup>45</sup> We also know that it took the parishioners of St Margaret's in Westminster 36 years to rebuild their - admittedly highly elaborate - church. Work started on the nave in 1487 and the roof was not on until 1502-03.<sup>46</sup> But a critical document which has never been cited before - the will of William Lene, a chaplain at Wighton - suggests that the nave was completed in good time. Lene's will requests burial in the "new chapel" at Wighton church and is dated December 21, 1417.<sup>47</sup> As we have seen, the old nave had no aisles and was only 6m wide, so it is virtually certain that there was no room for a chapel or even an altar (which had to be east-facing) - except in the chancel. Since a GPR (ground penetrating radar) survey of the nave and chancel floors undertaken for this thesis revealed no indication that the old church had transepts, the reference in Lene's will must be to a chapel in one of the aisles in the new nave.

In conclusion, the evidence derived from the masons' marks dates the Wighton nave arcades to 1412-20 and is convincingly corroborated by the will of William Lene, which confirms that the nave was finished by December 1417. These dates belie the estimates made on stylistic grounds in all but one of the previously published assessments set out at the beginning of this chapter: only Claude Messent's assertion that All Saints was in "the early Perpendicular style" is in line with this conclusion.<sup>48</sup> But completion by the end of 1417 is entirely consistent with the documented date of 1440-41 for the commencement of the new chancel. The gap of two decades before Woderove started work in 1440-41 is not unusual compared with other medieval building projects - at St Margaret's Westminster just mentioned, construction of the chancel (which is largely integral with nave) wasn't begun until 1517, 15 years after the nave was finished.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, the gap at Wighton may simply reflect changes in the cellarer's financial circumstances. The rolls reveal a relatively healthy set of accounts between 1400 and 1410 - around the time when the Wighton parishioners must have approached him for a commitment to rebuild the chancel. But this was followed by a sharp rise in debt, and the accounts continue in the red until 1440-41, exactly the year when work finally started on the new building. The finances then remained in credit for the next 20 years.<sup>50</sup>

## How the masons worked

As well as a tool for dating, the distribution of individual marks can also reveal how the masons worked (always allowing for the fact that some marks must be hidden on embedded surfaces). As Table 4 and fig. C (left) show, the pattern at Wighton indicates, for example, that three masons worked on the piers of the south arcade. Mason  $\perp$  is represented by a single mark on a pier base, while the work on all the marked drums was shared by mason  $\diamond$  (9 marks) and mason  $\mathcal{X}$  (8 marks).

<sup>45</sup> NRO DCN 1/2/61, DCN 1/2/66 and DCN 1/2/67.

<sup>46</sup> French 2011, 150-151.

<sup>47</sup> NRO NCC Hirning 40.

<sup>48</sup> Messent 1936, 273 used the dates 1400-1500 to define the Perpendicular period.

<sup>49</sup> French 2011, 150-151.

<sup>50</sup> Saunders 1930, 166-167.

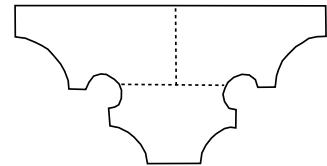
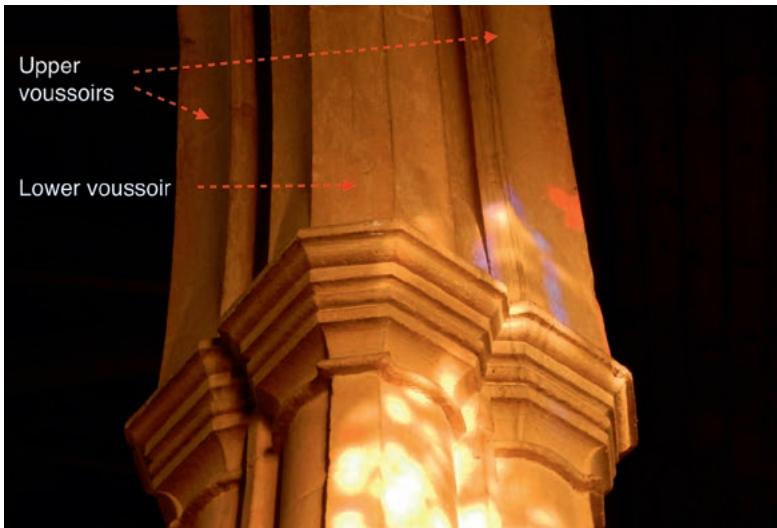


Fig. D. The nave arcade arches (left) are constructed from two rows of voussoirs: an upper row in two parts and a single lower row as in the cross section (above). About half of the voussoirs show a mason's mark, the rest are presumably hidden on embedded surfaces.

Mason  $\diamond$  also marked two of the steps on the rood stair and one of the lower sections on the south engaged piers which support the chancel arch. Both these two masons also marked two of the piers in the north arcade. Here the pier drums were most heavily marked by mason  $\mathcal{R}$ . He made 10 drums in total, which are found in all but one of the piers. Mason  $\mathfrak{T}$  worked with him, marking drums in three of the piers. He also made one of the bases and is prolific in most areas of the nave - working on voussoirs, the north aisle windows and the clerestory windows, indeed all areas except the south arcade and south aisle windows. These two masons had help making the north arcade from at least four others -  $\mathfrak{A}$  and  $\mathfrak{B}$  and, as already cited,  $\diamond$  and  $\mathcal{J}$ . The latter two also marked the south arcade. Overall it is a pattern suggesting either that two teams were working simultaneously, with some overlap, or that the personnel changed from one stage in the project, to the next.

Meanwhile the arch voussoirs (and the pier capitals) were also made by two different teams composed mostly of different masons. Only three ( $\diamond$ ,  $\mathfrak{U}$  and  $\mathfrak{T}$ ) worked on both arches and pier drums (perhaps they were more highly-skilled; work on the voussoirs certainly required a higher degree of precision than was needed to shape the drums.) The arches are made from an upper row comprising two voussoirs with a row of single voussoirs below (see Fig. D, above). On the south arcade, two individual masons worked (almost) exclusively on the lower row of voussoirs and four worked (almost) exclusively on the upper pieces.<sup>51</sup> One particular mason ( $\mathfrak{M}$ ) worked on all the lower voussoirs, and another ( $\mathfrak{U}$ ) on all but one of the upper rows. The northern arches appear to have been made in the main by a single mason ( $\mathfrak{T}$ ), who also made all the capitals.<sup>52</sup> However, he had some help from mason  $\mathfrak{h}$  on the lower voussoirs.

The marks on the two engaged piers also coincide with those of the masons most associated with

<sup>51</sup> Two of these marks ( $\mathfrak{U}$  and  $\mathfrak{U}$ ) are mirror versions of each other. Perhaps they were made by brothers, or father and son. However, it is possible they were made by the same mason (illiterate people cannot always distinguish between mirrored letters or devices such as these). If this was the case, the team cutting the upper voussoirs of the south arcade must be reduced from four to three and one of the masons - using the mirrored marks - was apparently responsible for most of the work.

<sup>52</sup> Except the half capital forming the eastern most respond (P1), which is unmarked.

**Table 5: Wighton nave arcades: number of voussoirs used in the arches**

North arcade (arch number)	N6	N5	N4	N3	N2	N1
Upper row north	8	10	9	9	8	9
Upper row south	7	9	10	10	9	9
Lower row	12	13	13	14	12	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>32</b>
South arcade (arch number)	S6	S5	S4	S3	S2	S1
Upper row north	8	8	7	9	8	8
Upper row south	9	8	8	7	8	7
Lower row	10	10	10	8	7	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>

Table 5 charts how the number of voussoirs increases if the sequence is followed clockwise from arch S1 to arch N1. The best explanation is that this reveals the order of construction of the arches as the masons used the large pieces of stone first.

the respective side of the church -  and  on the north side and mason  on the south. There are no marks visible on the chancel arch voussoirs themselves, however the southern capital is inscribed with a  and the northern one with a  - the two masons who made the north arcade arches. This suggests that they may have been responsible for cutting the chancel arch too and finished it after both arcades were in place. As we shall now see, this is a pattern consistent with the order of construction implied by an analysis of the voussoirs themselves.

### The order of construction of the nave arcades

Recording the masons' marks also drew attention to a distinct pattern in the composition of the nave arcade arches. The voussoirs are irregular in length and the number used to compose each arch varies significantly: the upper arches comprise between seven and 10, the lower between seven and 14.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, as Table 5 (above) demonstrates, there are significant differences between the numbers of voussoirs used in each arcade. On average the total number used in each arch in the south arcade is 24.66, compared with 30.83 in the north arcade, and these averages reflect a consistent difference between the two. The arches of the south arcade each have markedly fewer voussoirs than all but one of the north arcade arches (the only exception is N6 which, with 27, has the same number as S6). Even more significantly, if we start at S1 (the south-eastern-most point) and continue to count clockwise around the arches, the total number of voussoirs used to construct each arch steadily increases, faltering only slightly in arches N2 and N1. It follows the sequence: 23, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27; then continuing directly across the west wall of the nave to the north side of the church: 27, 32, 32, 33, 29, 32. Statistically, there is less than

<sup>53</sup> As a rule, the smallest sections are placed near the apex of the arch - presumably because they were more easily manipulated and fitted than the heavier sections.

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one chance in a thousand that this is a random pattern of increase.<sup>54</sup> It must therefore reflect the choices and working pattern - conscious or otherwise - of the masons concerned. The most obvious explanation is that the mason-cutters preferred to use the largest pieces of freestone to make each arch and therefore selected them first. Contemporary masons, including Heather Newton (currently Head of Stone-masonry and Conservation at Canterbury Cathedral), have confirmed to me in conversation that this would make sense and be the most likely explanation of the sequence.

It is true that the differences in size might be explained by sequential deliveries of stone. A second delivery of larger stones, unavailable when the first arcade was built, would be consistent with the south arcade being constructed after the north one. Such an occurrence would best explain, for example, the voussoir counts at Fincham and East Winch. In these churches there is a very big difference between the north and south arcades - at Winch an average of 46 in the north and 24.75 in the south, and at Fincham 28 (north) and 39.8 (south) - but no clear incremental pattern. By contrast, the steadily-increasing sequence at Wighton is so remarkable that it is logical to accept the simpler rationale - that the masons favoured larger pieces. This explanation is further supported by the fact that the whole construction project seems to have been approached in a piecemeal way. This was confirmed by measuring the spans of the arcades, which revealed a variation suggesting that the arches were tailor-made in sequence, rather than constructed them all together as a standard job-lot.

As Fig. E shows (right), there is an adjustment halfway through construction of the south arcade, and perhaps more than one adjustment in the north. The span of arches S1-S3 (measured from the inside edge of one pier to the inside of the opposite pier) is consistently precise. Each measures 290cm. Then comes the adjustment: the spans of arches S4-S6 measure 304, 306 and 303cm respectively. There is also a pattern of adjustments the north side, where the measurements are (in sequence N1-N6) 287, 289, 299, 300, 299 and 293cm - suggesting a 10cm tweak was for the two easternmost arches.<sup>55</sup> So, combined with the evidence from the voussoir count, it appears that on the south side, the masons built as far as the central pier (P4) and then realised that to continue with the same measurements would leave them some 47cm short of the west gable. They extended the next three spans to compensate. This adjustment was not strictly speaking necessary because the final engaged pier does not directly abut the west gable - there is a 30cm stub wall between the back of the half-pier and the gable and this could have easily been extended to the 77cm necessary to continue an even span of 290cm for each arch. But such a long stub wall may have been felt to be unacceptably obvious and so less satisfactory than an imperceptible variation in arch span.

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<sup>54</sup> Based on Spearman's Rank Test: the chances of this sequence occurring randomly is less than 0.1 per cent. Again, my thanks are due to Gillian Butler for mathematical guidance (see footnote 44 of this chapter).

<sup>55</sup> Note that while the variation in spans is clear enough to show a definite pattern, at less than 20cm the difference between the widest (306cm) and narrowest (287cm) might nevertheless not seem very great. However, even this relatively small variation is enough to create a variation in the circumference of the *intrados* of about 30cm - although while this would have affected the shaping of the curvature of the voussoirs, it does not seem to have a bearing on the number used - see Table 5, page 33.

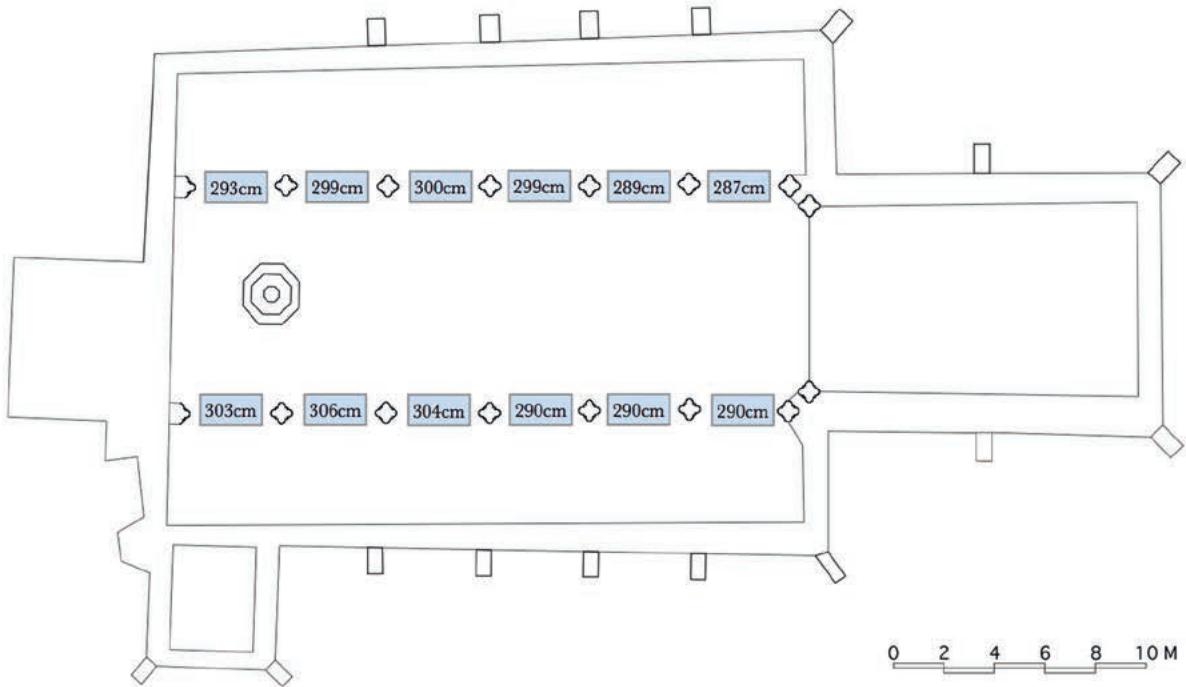


Fig E (above) is a measured drawing of the nave of Wighton church, revealing the lack of symmetry of the plan - note the drift of the north wall. It also demonstrates the lack of consistency in the construction process. The figures superimposed specify the arch spans measured between each pier. A clear adjustment by the masons can be seen halfway along the south arcade and for the easternmost two bays on the north arcade.

From the masons' point of view, such an apparent miscalculation and the way in which it was adjusted, must have involved a certain degree of awkwardness. They would have had to make new patterns for the different sized arches, and - if they were being re-used as the arcade progressed - the wooden centerings which held the voussoirs in place while the mortar set would have had to be adapted. True, it isn't known how long centerings were left in place, nor to what extent they were recycled (see construction techniques, overleaf); but it does seem a strange miscalculation. After all, despite the variation in spans, the masons were able to keep the height of the arches consistent - a requirement much more challenging to engineer than to ensure the piers were evenly spaced. The measurement from current floor level to the underside of the apex varies by no more than 1cm from the average of 6.1m on the south arcade. On the slightly lower north arcade the deviation from the average height of 6.04m is never more than 2cm.<sup>56</sup> The height of the pier capitals of each arcade is also virtually identical, so slight adjustments were made in the construction of each arch to ensure that the uneven span did not affect the finished height of the apex.

The width of the nave between the arcade piers is also consistent - important if the wall plates for the roof trusses were to be kept parallel. Interestingly too, while the south wall of the nave was kept parallel with the arcades to a high level of accuracy, the north wall was not. More precision was needed on the south side of the church because the exterior of the nave wall has a stone plinth course running between the chancel and the tower, including a series of joints and angles around the buttresses, porch, porch stair and tower stair, so care was clearly taken to get

<sup>56</sup> The nave floor is laid with nineteenth-century pantiles and is probably at least 10cm higher than it was in the fifteenth century. The height of the arcade is measured from this floor - which is level.

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this right. On the north side of the church - which was away from the main entrance porch, so less often seen - no money was spent on installing a plinth. As Fig. E clearly shows, the line of this wall drifts outwards by more than 30cm - so the aisle gets wider as you walk from west to east. The east and west walls of north aisle are also out of parallel - by about 13cm, compared with just 2cm in the south aisle. Clearly the rough masons building the north aisle walls were not as careful or skilled in their setting out as they might have been.

## **Construction techniques**

The sequential approach to building the arcades set out above makes sense given both the technology of the time and the high cost of timber needed for false-work and scaffold. The pier bases - which are made of several sections - could be lugged, levered or lifted into position relatively easily by two men with a barrow and a crow bar. But above base height (91cm) each pier section is, on average, about 0.17 cubic metres in volume, and so weighs about 339kg. It is possible that a relatively manoeuverable tripod, with a central block at the peak, could have been used to work up to a height of about 1.5m. But scaffolding and a crane would certainly have been needed to raise the pier above that height and then lower sections into position on the mortar bed.

This scaffold must have been constructed in stages as the pier was raised. At full height, it could have been used to support a working platform from which masons could position the voussoirs of the arch. The most efficient way of working would have been to leave the scaffold on the most recently-built pier, dismantle the structure surrounding the pier on the far side of the arch and then “leap frog” the scaffold over to the next pier to be constructed. In this way the work could have continued without the need to reconstruct more than one set of scaffolding at a time. The crane would probably have been able to service both the new pier and the arch itself - so would need to be moved only on completion of each arch. This is likely to have been a relatively heavy and awkward job, so minimising such movements would have made sense. Salzman reprints a contract of 1442 for the building of a tower and other work for the parish church of Dunster in Somerset.<sup>57</sup> It includes a promise of help with moving the crane and heavy stone: “the crane at all tyme necessary for the same worke ... schall be removyd at the cost of the paroch forsayd with help of Jon Maryce [the mason] and his mayny... Allso if there be any stone ywrogyte of such quantyte that ij men or iij at most may not kary hym the sayde paroch schall helpe hym.” This crane was for a bigger job - the erection of a tower. But it is unlikely that the Wighton masons had access to more than one crane, or that they would want to move it more often than necessary.

As for the use of centerings, these relatively substantial wooden frames were designed to take the weight of the voussoirs as they were laid. Once the arch was complete, and as long as they were still in place, they would have also reduced sideways pressure on the abutments.<sup>58</sup> Before

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<sup>57</sup> Salzman 1952, 514-515.

<sup>58</sup> For an account of thrust in voussoir arches see Heyman 1995, 15ff and Fitchen 1961, 42-44.

the centering was removed however, some sort of bracing or buttressing would have been needed to prevent the risk of collapse or distortion. This would not have been a problem where the arcade was being installed along the line of the old south wall (see p. 21) - that could have been demolished in stages and so used as support as the arcade progressed. On the north side, however, props would have been needed.

What isn't known is how long the centerings were left in place in order to allow for the mortar to set. Though they appear only extremely rarely in contemporary drawings and paintings - centerings are depicted in just two of Gunther Binding's collection of more than 900 illustrations of medieval building work - that doesn't prove that they were not left in place while the work went on.<sup>59</sup> As John Fitchen points out, this is probably because artists were not interested in precise documentation and tended not to show aspects of a building site which they did not consider pertinent.<sup>60</sup> They preferred, it seems, the dramatic visual impact of cranes rather than the technical details of false-work. (Even in the two cases of cited in Binding's collection, the centering is depicted without the supporting legs which would have been structurally necessary.)

Presumably however, given the cost of materials, centerings would have been reused as quickly as possible, just as scaffolding and working platforms were designed to minimise the amount of timber and hurdles required. Again, Fitchen is perceptive on this point: "Centering was certainly the most demanding erectional problem encountered by the medieval builders. When its inherent difficulties are considered along with the builders' evident determination to rationalise and reduce the amount of material used for the false-work structure, it is inescapably clear that the design and technique of placing centres became a major preoccupation of the architects, extracting from them the utmost in resourcefulness, ingenuity and practical experience".<sup>61</sup> But opinions among modern historians of the structural engineering of vaults and arches is divided, especially when it comes to estimating the optimum length of time for which centering should be left in place. The only meaningful documentation is for a much later period. A study of nineteenth-century bridge building in France, quoted by Fitchen, cites an example which centering was removed after 90 minutes, and another after 1,145 days. The most usual period being "somewhere between 21 and 90 days".<sup>62</sup> This is more confirmation, if needed, that the arcades may have taken three or more years to build - especially if the bays were indeed constructed in sequence. The clerestory would have needed at least two more in addition to that. So, even if the roof was pre-fabricated and fitted immediately - as at Hardley<sup>63</sup> - it is hard to see the rebuilding of the nave taking less than five years.

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<sup>59</sup> Binding 2004.

<sup>60</sup> Fitchen 1961, 7.

<sup>61</sup> Fitchen 1961, 29.

<sup>62</sup> Fitchen 1961, 262-265.

<sup>63</sup> Woodman 1994.

## Building the chancel

There are no mason's marks visible in the chancel at All Saints. Probably the masons were paid a daily or weekly wage rather than a piece rate so there was no need to mark the stone. This would be consistent with phrasing of the entry in cathedral cellarar's roll for 1440-41 which uses the Latin word for wages, *stipend*, to refer to payments made to stone cutters, masons and labourers. The full entry referring to *Expenses circa repara veterum Wighton Chancel* reads as follows (my translation):

*For purchase of five and a half tontights [tons] of free stone: 49s 6d. For burnt lime [or lime burning] £4 8s. For sand and stones 3s 8d. Item payment to James Woderove for work on said chancel for 57 days at 4d per day, 19s. Item spent on other freemasons working with him 26s 8d. Wages [for] stone masons working on walls there 54s 1½d. In wages for cutting freestone for said chancel 5s 2d. Wages paid for labouring & demolishing old walls and helping stonemasons £4 10s 10d. For hire of carts for carriage of material for work on same chancel 21s 8d. For trowels, sieves and hurdles and other instruments/tools purchased for the same work 8s 11d. Item payment for the board [i.e. food] of the workers on the said chancel with their lodgings 43s 10d. Item James Wodereve [sic] and his colleagues for expenses going to and from Wighton 3s 8d.*

*Total: £20 15s ½d.*<sup>64</sup>

This is an exceptionally rare account of the costs of work on a new chancel and while it leaves many questions unanswered, it does allow us to draw some tentative conclusions. First, the project was overseen by the leading mason-architect in Norfolk at the time. James Woderove was regarded highly enough to be sent for by Henry VI to work on the new chapel at Eton in 1449, for which he was paid the high reward of £7 plus £2 travel expenses. Between 1415 and his death in 1451, he was responsible for parts of the Norwich cathedral cloister, other key work at the priory, and probably the Erpingham Gate.<sup>65</sup> He was probably also responsible for the rebuilding of several other churches in Norwich and Norfolk, including St Peter Hungate, Wiveton (6 miles from Wighton) and Great Cressingham (see pp. 90 and 92). The quality of the workmanship in the Wighton chancel is apparent in the (now damaged) flint-work of the south wall, the flush-work on the buttresses and the exceptionally fine east window, which would have been considered the showpiece of the project. Here the unusual "shouldered ogee" shape of the archlets at the top of the main lights is a distinctive feature of Woderove's work and is explored further in Chapter Two (p. 90). The design of the north and south windows is much more conventional, suggesting that these may have been done by an assistant, though there is nothing clumsy about the execution - the tracery and mullions are notably slender in profile.

The second insight provided by the rolls is that the rebuilding of Wighton chancel marked the beginning of a significant phase of investment by the cathedral priory in the churches which

<sup>64</sup> NRO DCN 1/2/54. The arithmetic is 4d short - the correct total should be £20 15s 4½d - but such errors are common in medieval accounting.

<sup>65</sup> Harvey 1984, 343.

were appropriated to it. After Wighton, the cellarer built new chancels at Martham (1456-57 - 1468-69), Hempstead (1470-71 - 1474-75) and Worstead (1484-85 - 1487-88). In 1458-59 he also invested heavily at Aldeby.<sup>66</sup> Chancels were the responsibility of the rector and, in the fifteenth century, new ones were not nearly as common as the widespread aggrandisement of parish church naves. In North Greenhoe, there were other chancel reconstructions only at Wells-next-the-Sea (apparently paid for by the rector Thomas Bradley),<sup>67</sup> at Little Walsingham (where the priory to which the church was appropriated and the parish itself were exceptionally wealthy) and at Great Snoring which was paid for by the Shelton family (see p. 94-95).

Most importantly from the point of view of the fabric of Wighton church however, the rolls give us a rare and useful insight into the cost of the new chancel. The figures quoted in 1440-41 are problematic because the entries are terse and require considerable glossing but, once decoded, they are revealing. For example, the bill for materials prices the stone at 9s a ton (5½ tons at 49s 6d). Much of this cost would have covered transport from the quarry, and the rate of 9s was almost certainly the price delivered to site via Wells and then by cart (about three miles), or via Blakeney harbour and then up the river from Stiffkey by small horse-drawn lighters or punts.<sup>68</sup> (It is conceivable that the main masons' lodge, or at least the roughing out work, was located down by the river - which then ran about 100m nearer the church than it does today - before being heaved the last 150m up the slope to the building site.) At this price, Woderove seems to have paid about 30 per cent more for the stone than the rates preserved in other surviving contracts of the time. For example, in 1458-59 Robert Everard paid 7s a ton for 6 tons of freestone for the new chancel at Hardley, Norfolk, which he bought from a depot in Yarmouth and shipped to Norwich at a cost of 8d a ton.<sup>69</sup> And a little over 12 tons of Stapleton stone (from south Yorkshire) was entered in the accounts for the repairs to London Bridge of 1411 at £4 6s 11d (about 7s a ton) - the price probably included shipping.<sup>70</sup> The precise amount ordered by Woderove, calculated to the nearest half ton, was certainly not enough stone for the whole chancel project, so it may represent his requirements for making the east window, which would also explain the premium price paid.

The bill for burnt lime (£4 8d) is very high compared with that for sand and stones at 3s 8d (stones here presumably refers to flints). In 1449-50, in Norwich, the same Robert Everard, who was then also working for the cellarer, paid 5s for 15 cartloads of sand and 18s 4d plus 26d

<sup>66</sup> £6 10s 6d was spent on the chancel - perhaps for the south chancel aisle or new windows.

<sup>67</sup> Blomefield 1805-10, vol. 9, 286. Bradley was rector from 1446-99.

<sup>68</sup> Hammond and Barnett 1996 proposed that punts of about 1.75m by 3-4m were used to ferry produce and materials on the spring-fed Heacham River chalk stream from the Heacham on the Wash, through Sedgeford to Fring "harbour", a distance of about 10km. This compares to a distance of about 12km from Blakeney Harbour to Walsingham "Port" (3km upstream of Wighton) on the River Stiffkey - also a spring-fed chalk stream and a considerably longer and more substantial waterway.

<sup>69</sup> Woodman 1994, 204.

<sup>70</sup> Salzman 1952, 136.

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carriage for lime.<sup>71</sup> It suggests that Woderove bought enough lime to mix with about 60 cartloads of sand - probably lime enough for building the whole chancel. So he must have bought, or been offered, additional sand another time. The bill for carts, tools and equipment mentioned in the account roll represented standard practice.

The labour costs paid are more problematic. The 57 days of James Woderove's time were probably spread over a longer period - hence the travel expenses of 3s 8d as he went to and from Norwich 30 miles away. Looking at the costs in more detail, Woderove's stated pay of 4d a day is consistent with the summertime rate for a freemason or master carpenter as fixed by a statute of 1446, and the amount paid to masons who rebuilt Hardley chancel in south-east Norfolk in 1459-60.<sup>72</sup> Rough-masons could expect 3d a day, and labourers 2d. Under the statute the allowance for food was a further 1½ d a day. But even though he was given additional money for board and lodging, Woderove's rate at Wighton is not consistent with other amounts paid to him by the cathedral priory, nor apparently on a par with the reward he received from the king for his work at Eton (see above). Early on in his career at Norwich, in 1415-16, he and his brother James received 2s 4d a week (4d a day) each,<sup>73</sup> with food in addition. By 1423-24 they were receiving £28 1s 11d for 24 weeks work on the north walk of the cathedral cloister, which works out at an remarkable 3s 4d a day. (This extraordinarily high sum may have included reimbursement for the cost of stone or other materials.)<sup>74</sup> Meanwhile, other masons received around 6d a day from the priory: in 1411-12 it paid Hervey Lyng - the mason in charge until 1416 - and his son a total of 6s 8d a week for 11 weeks, while John Bale received 3s a week.<sup>75</sup> Elsewhere, the two "hewers" employed at King's Hall, Cambridge in 1431 received 2s 4d a week each plus 11d for food, the chief mason was given 3s a week, plus 22d for food, and labourers 15d a week, plus 11d for food.<sup>76</sup> So Woderove seems distinctly underpaid for the Wighton job. Perhaps his rate was supplemented by other payments or retainers, as Woodman suggests when discussing similarly modest rates paid to the masons at Hardley.<sup>77</sup>

Despite the low wage apparently paid to Woderove himself, it must be assumed that the other masons and labourers at Wighton were earning standard rates and we can use these to establish roughly how many man hours the cellararer was paying for in this account. If we assume that the "other freemasons working with him" refers to the colleagues who accompanied Woderove to and from Norwich and so we divide the 26s 8d paid to them by 57 days, it works out at a little over 5½d a day. This is enough to pay for one other mason at 3d

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<sup>71</sup> NRO DCN 1/2/59.

<sup>72</sup> Salzman 1952, 75-76 and Woodman 1994, 204.

<sup>73</sup> Assuming we divide by seven - although masons would normally have worked six days a week. Hours were normally from dawn to dusk, although on Saturdays and the eve of feast days, they finished earlier - at 3pm (Salzman 1952, 30).

<sup>74</sup> Woodman 1996, 173.

<sup>75</sup> Woodman 1996, 172.

<sup>76</sup> Salzman 1952, 76.

<sup>77</sup> Woodman 1994, 204-206.

a day, plus an assistant or apprentice at 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. The 43s 10d payment for board and lodging, if it covered 57 nights, works out at just over 9d a night - so that would fit with the three men receiving a per person rate of just over 3d. By comparison, in 1508, Agnes Coo of Swaffham was paid 26d for boarding Gyles the freemason and his son for a week, which is the equivalent of about 2d a night each.<sup>78</sup>

While these figures are certainly not conclusive, they suggest that Woderove was probably working and living with two of his regular team from Norwich. Other masons and labourers must have been hired locally since there are no additional travel or lodging costs. The total quoted for wages for the men working on the walls is 54s 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. At 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ d a day (for labour and food) that equates to roughly 144 days labour. If they were hired continuously for 50 days, this suggests a team of three more masons was working with Woderove and his two colleagues, or that two men were on site for 12 weeks. The further £4 10s 10d for those "labouring & demolishing old walls and helping stonecutters" would be enough to pay for 363 days' labour at 3d a day each - six men over 57 days, or, for example, five over 12 weeks.

In summary, and according to these calculations, Woderove would have probably had between nine and 11 men working under him for about 9-12 weeks, or fewer for longer if they could work unsupervised by him. Perhaps a more accurate way of looking at it is that the cellarer paid for what amounts to a maximum of 140 weeks of manpower, plus Woderove's own time during that summer. How much would that enable them to achieve in that first phase? The roll states that the old walls were demolished, so the site must also have been laid out, foundations established and work must started on the walls and probably on the cutting of the window traceries. Woderove would surely have taken the opportunity to ensure that the east window in particular was shaped accurately and may have worked on it with his own hands; we know that when he was summoned to Eton in 1449, he took his tools with him.

There is no obvious build line in the flint walls, but it is unlikely that they were raised much above the base of the windows in the first season because of the need for the mortar to set. Probably three years was the minimum time required to reach the height of the wall plate (9.15m) and the top of the gable end (11.6m). So, if the total bill for the first year was £20 15s 1/2d, we can triple this to reach a rough working estimate for this part of the building of £60. Other costs given in Table 1 (p. 18) allow us to calculate an approximate overall figure. The roof was £16, and allowing for the glazing of four windows at £9 (based on £2 5s each), plus the east window glazing at, say £3 10s,<sup>79</sup> we come to a total broad-brush cost of £88 10s. This estimate may be a little high - it compares with a total of £66 13s 4d paid by the cellarer to build the new chancel at Martham, for example, though this appears to have been slightly more modest in size,

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<sup>78</sup> Rix 1952, 30.

<sup>79</sup> The tower window at Swaffham, which is considerably larger than the east window at Wighton, cost at least £5 to glaze (Rix 1954, 24).



MARTHAM CHURCH

*Martham Church sketched by Robert Ladbrooke c. 1820-40. It shows the chancel built by the mason John Everard for the cathedral priory between 1456-57 and 1465-66. It is no longer extant, having been rebuilt in the nineteenth century.*

and certainly had a smaller east window (above).<sup>80</sup> But even at this price, the Wighton chancel was certainly easily affordable for the cellarer. Spread over the 15 years it took to complete, the annualised cost was only one and a half per cent of his total gross income of just under £400 p. a.<sup>81</sup> Even so, he was careful not to overstretch his budget - the four new chancels built by holders of the office between 1440 and 1488 were constructed and paid for sequentially, suggesting that the investments were being deliberately phased.<sup>82</sup>

### **The cost of the new nave**

Estimating the expenditure on the nave at Wighton is challenging because we have no accounts, many variables and little in the archives generally which helps gauge precise building costs. However, we can use the chancel as a guide and that helps in some key areas. Because of its relatively large size and height (partly attributable to the falling ground of the eastern end of the

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<sup>80</sup> Cattermole and Cotton 1983.

<sup>81</sup> The figure for income in 1440 (Saunders 1930, 167).

<sup>82</sup> The only exception was the contribution to the chancel at Aldeby which came during the building of Martham.

site), the total amount of walling involved in Woderove's building is nearly as great as for the nave. The flint-work is however, of a higher specification: on the south wall, though now much damaged by weathering and poor-quality repair, the careful selection and laying of the flints, and the galleting of the joints is still discernible. This work was clearly designed for show, whereas the nave and clerestory walls were originally rendered. On the other hand, the nave walls - especially around the clerestory - required working at greater height and there were more buttresses to install. Overall it is therefore reasonable to suppose that the basic building cost of the nave walls was likely to have been similar to that of the chancel. We should thus allow £60 - my extrapolation from the first year's payment by the cellarer specified above - for this. The extra windows would, nevertheless, have added to the price. The chancel has only five windows, whereas the nave has 14 in the aisles and 13 at clerestory height. However, the four north and south windows of the chancel are about 20 per cent larger and so probably cost roughly the same as five nave windows. The east window is also a very substantial and expensive piece of work and could easily have cost five times more than a nave window. Thus we might assume that the cost of the chancel's five windows was equivalent to 10 in the nave. So only an additional four costing about £7 each (including glazing), must be added to the overall total, plus the 13 clerestory windows at about £3 each. This produces a total of £67.

There are other details which must be considered. The base course along the south of the nave and the porch - and not continued around the chancel - required a substantial amount of stone, as did the rood stair, and the frame of the south door is far larger and more elaborate than the chancel doors. So we might allow an additional £10 for that stonework. The biggest single difference between the nave and chancel however is the arcade. By measuring the amount of uncut stone required to cut the bases, drums, capitals and voussoirs, a total volume and weight can be calculated. Each pier requires roughly 126 cubic feet of stone, or 6.72 tons, and each arch about 99 cubic feet or 5.28 tons, a total requirement of 12 tons per bay, or 144 tons in all. The chancel arch required about twice as much stone as a single arcade arch, adding 24 tons. This gives us a final total of 168 tons.<sup>83</sup> If the parish paid the same amount for this as James Woderove did for the chancel stone - 9s a ton - that works out at £75 13s - say £75.<sup>84</sup> The labour costs for cutting and assembling such complex masonry, plus the necessary crane, scaffolding and timber false-work, would have added significantly to this. If we allow £50 (£40 for labour, £10 for the crane etc.), it would be enough to cover 1,600 days of labour, assuming the masons were being paid 6d a day (including food). That should be more than sufficient to pay the 14 masons who cut the drums and voussoirs for the 12 arcade arches plus the chancel arch, as well as those who laid them. Counting the chancel arch as requiring double the time of an arcade arch, this works out at 100 days or £2 10s per arch (including one pier), which seems reasonable, perhaps generous. We therefore have total of £125 including all labour and materials for the construction of the nave arcade and chancel arch.

<sup>83</sup> Imperial measures have been used because that is how medieval stone was priced. One ton is the equivalent of 1,016 kg; 100 cubic feet is 2.83 cubic metres.

<sup>84</sup> This figure may well be on the high side, since the stone for the arcade piers was probably of lower quality and therefore cheaper than that of the window traceries and the arch voussoirs.

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The cost of the roof would have depended on how elaborate it was, the type of covering, and whether or not there was any decorative carving, but the span is only 40cm greater than that of the chancel (7.62m compared with 7.22m) and it is just under twice as long (23.58m compared with 12.18m). Though clearly higher and therefore harder to install, the base cost of materials and carpentry would be about same per metre of length, so a total price of about £35 - a little more than double the known cost of the chancel roof - is probably not far off the mark. The lean-to aisle roofs were clearly much easier to construct and less complex to install. So for these it seems reasonable to allow £15, giving us a total of £50 for roofing the nave.

Overall, then we can estimate £60 for walling, £67 for additional windows including glazing, £10 for additional stonework, £125 for the arcades and chancel arch and £50 for the roof. The total resulting - £312 - is clearly highly approximate. It was probably mitigated by the use of recycled stone and flint from the old nave, and inflated by many extras not included in the calculation - from the font and pulpit, to the chancel screen, wall paintings, benches, flooring and so on. There are few sources which allow us to judge its accuracy. But some extremely rare building accounts of 1469-71 show that the parishioners of Bodmin appear to have paid at least £270 to rebuild their nave - which is larger than Wighton's but has no clerestory.<sup>85</sup> In 1434 the building contract for Fotheringhay church in Northamptonshire specified £300 for the all-in labour costs of an ornate, six-bay nave, which included a high, buttressed clerestory, much bigger windows than Wighton, an 80ft tower with tower arch and two porches.<sup>86</sup> The entire building was faced with ashlar, and although the stone was available locally, material costs would have certainly more than doubled this. So, in this context, £312 seems a reasonable working figure for the Wighton nave. It is probably on the high side, but it is always wise to include a contingency when estimating building costs. Whatever the final amount, it was a very substantial sum and the process by which such funds might have been raised in a village the size of Wighton will be considered in detail in Chapters Three and Four. It does seem however that the initial fundraising efforts may have fallen short, or that plans changed before the work was completed. As we have seen, though the porch was laid out with the rest of the nave, it was left unfinished, or a later decision was made to add a second storey - work on completing it, and also on embellishing the tower, apparently did not begin again in the 1490s. We know too little about what this final phase involved to estimate costs, but the total of £16 3s 4d which was left to church reparations in surviving wills between 1483 and 1498 (Table 2, p. 19) must have covered a significant proportion of the work.

## Conclusions

Before 1983, when Cattermole and Cotton identified the references to the Wighton chancel in the cellarer's rolls and in later wills, attempts at dating All Saints relied entirely on judgments based on perceptions of architectural styles. But, while the rolls provided clear dates for the chancel and the evidence of wills a back-stop for the final touches applied to the tower battlements and the finishing of the porch, the date of the nave remained obscure. Close

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<sup>85</sup> Byng feels the figure for Bodmin is on the low side and probably omits some significant spending (Byng 2014, 73).

<sup>86</sup> Salzman 1952, 505-506.

examination of the fabric and the development of new dating techniques using masons' marks, combined with the discovery of the reference to a new chapel in William Lene's will, has now allowed a much more precise chronology to be determined. Based on all this evidence, the genesis of the medieval church can be traced back to four main construction phases.

**Fourteenth century and earlier** There was certainly a church in the village in 1205 when it was appropriated to the cellarer and it seems extremely likely that it would have been on the same prominent site overlooking the river. It is impossible to gauge the form of the church at this time, but the nave which predates the current one was about 6m wide and 10.5m high. The length can't be accurately determined, but it may have been up to 20m long ending in a chancel a little less than 6m in width. The tower which collapsed in 1965 was built about 1300 and was added to that nave.

**1412-17** The old nave was demolished and the one that stands today was added to the tower and was complete by the end of 1417. The cost of constructing the nave is estimated at £312.

**1440-70** The old chancel was rased and a new one built to replace it, with the entire project costing approximately £88 10s.

**1490s** Battlements, flush-work and heraldic panels were added to the tower. Work on the porch, which was never completed to plan, was apparently still going on. Legacies in the 1480s and 1490s contributed £16 3s 4d to this work.

It has also been demonstrated that the nave arcade must have been built in a clockwise sequence starting at S1 (the south-east corner) and finishing at N1 (the north-east corner). One team of masons worked on the south arcade. They began with a consistent spacing between the piers but had to adjust this measurement after the first three arches were built. Another team of masons worked on the north arcade, probably taking over after the south arcade was complete, though at least two masons (J and Z) remained on site to work on the north side. The chancel arch must have been completed once both arcades were finished, and the masons' marks are consistent with this. Although there are no marks on the voussoirs, the north capital of the chancel arch pier was marked by T and the south by H, both of whom worked on the north arcade but not the south. At least two of the north arcade masons T and R also went on to work on the windows of the north aisle and T, the most prolific marker of all, worked on the clerestory windows on both sides of the church.

It isn't only in the matching and distribution of masons' marks and the analysis and measurement of the stonework of the arcades which has yielded vital data in this assessment of All Saints, however. The next chapter examines the window traceries and the stained glass, from which important conclusions about the date of the glass and the sponsorship of the entire nave project may be deduced.



## *Chapter Two*

### *The windows and the stained glass*

The no doubt once elaborate and colourful scheme of interior embellishment - the wall paintings, the statuary, perhaps a decorated wooden pulpit, font cover and other adornments - have long been lost at Wighton. The fifteenth-century octagonal font is still *in situ* - carved with religious heraldry and the instruments of the passion (see p. 83) - but it is an unremarkable example, especially compared with the seven sacrament font at neighbouring Little Walsingham, and it yields no useful information on patronage. The sockets from the original installation of a chancel screen are visible in the chancel arch and three panels - two green with spread eagles stencilled in gold leaf, the other red with a foliate design in silver leaf - survive, together with their carved tracery heads.<sup>1</sup> They have distinct similarities to those at Castle Acre and are currently under restoration at the Hamilton Kerr Institute; a report is forthcoming. However, by far the most significant survival from the medieval decoration of Wighton church is the stained glass in the upper tracery compartments and main lights of four nave windows, and it demands investigation at greater length. Although there has been some scholarly interest in this glass over the last 70 years, there has never been a thorough survey and there has been only limited analysis of its connections with glass in other churches. The bulk of this chapter will therefore address this omission and also include in the survey more than 100 newly-discovered pieces of medieval glass which have been found in the church chest. Particular reference will also be made to the window tracery designs and the evidence this provides regarding the system of patronage which may have been adopted for the rebuilding of the nave. Finally this chapter will suggest a significant revision to current scholarly opinion as to when the glass at Wighton, and at several other churches, was made and installed.

Glass painting in fifteenth-century Norfolk was a flourishing industry which prospered from the rebuilding work undergone at so many of the county's churches from the 1360s until the

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<sup>1</sup> Lunnon 2010, 115-116.

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early 1500s. New naves, clerestories, towers, aisles and chancels all required extensive glazing and, even among those parishes which did no major architectural restructuring work, it is a rare Norfolk church which did not install at least one new window - identifiable by the Perpendicular style of tracery - during the long fifteenth century. Part of the motivation for installing these windows and clerestories must have been to introduce more light into the building, but a change in preference for tracery designs and the connection between this and the imagery depicted in them, is also significant. Tracery comprises the interior stone structures in window openings which - along with the iron armatures holding the glass in place - were essential to the structural integrity of both windows and walls. But they had also long been exploited as frames for coloured glass painted with devotional, liturgical and didactic imagery - especially since the introduction of bar tracery in the thirteenth century (which, as it happens, was pioneered in England in the west window of Binham priory, 2 miles east of Wighton).

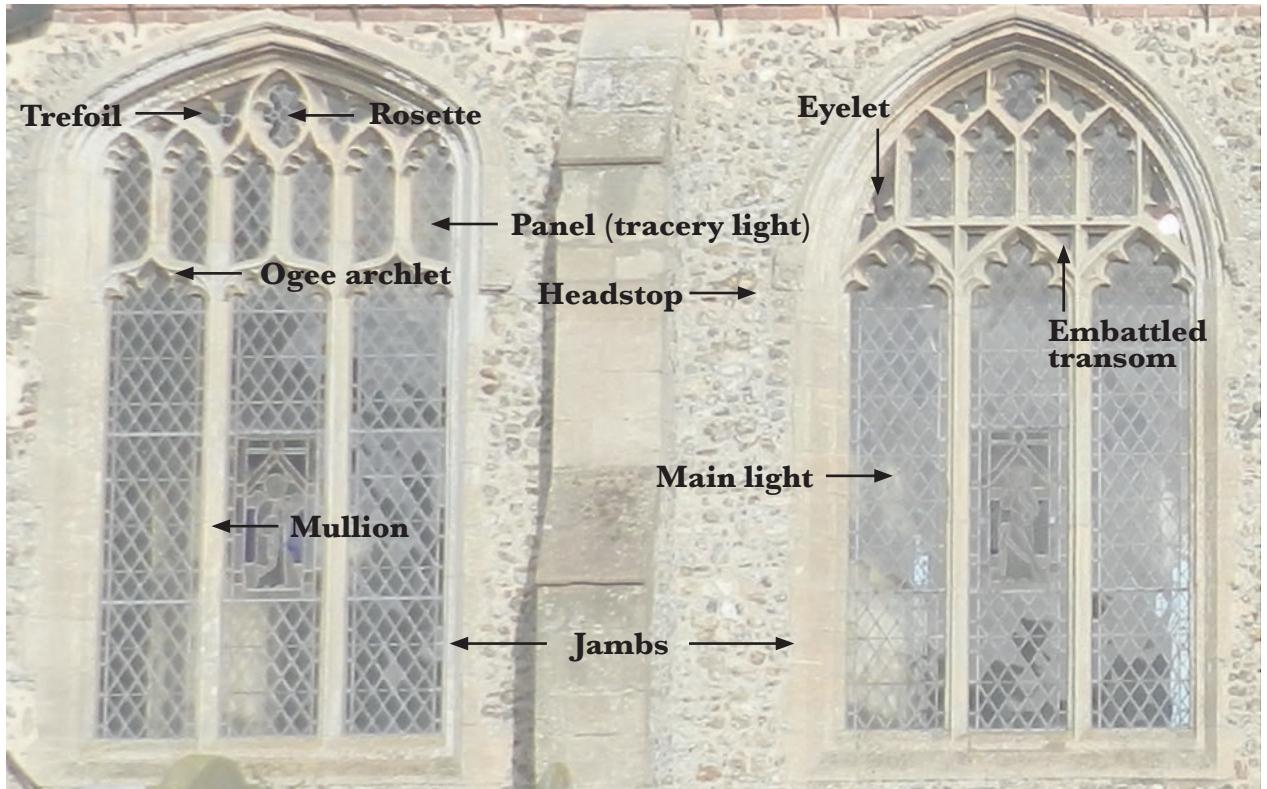
Over the next century and more, tastes in tracery design changed in a series of relatively distinctive shifts.<sup>2</sup> But by the last quarter of the fourteenth century, the fundamental characteristics of the Perpendicular style - a series of vertical compartments in the tracery heads - was established. It was a style which was to endure in various manifestations all over England for more than 100 years. The standard overview is John Harvey's *The Perpendicular Style 1330-1485* published in 1978, but recent work on tracery designs in Norfolk has also been published by Birkin Haward and Sandy Heslop.<sup>3</sup> A typical arrangement in a fifteenth-century parish church such as Wighton - for both aisle and clerestory windows - would be three main lights, with a row of four panels set in the top of the arch immediately above them (see opposite for a guide to architectural terms). The remaining spaces around the sides and tops of these panels were punctuated and embellished with eyelets and rosettes to ensure the outlines of the stone work did not become too heavy or clumsy. Windows with a high-shouldered, flatter arch typically had room for six panels above the main lights. Bigger windows, such as the east window at Wighton (p. 211), might have as many as five main lights with ten panels above, though more elaborate tracery designs often complicated the arrangement.

In fact, while there are many fundamental similarities between traceries in medieval churches, there are so many possible arch shapes, templates and variations that exact replicas are the exception rather than the rule. Even a simple detail such as the archlets above the main lights might have a rounded, peaked or an ogee shape. And each of these might vary; at Wighton, for example, the ogees are of three different types - one relatively flat, another more curvaceous and another with a "shouldered" form (see pp. 89-90). And those different styles of archlet might be used consistently, or two types might be alternated in a repeating pattern. In short, it seems that

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<sup>2</sup> The window openings in the different ranges of the cloisters at Norwich cathedral, which were built in phases from 1297-1394, provide one of the most convenient demonstrations of these developing fashions. They range from the "geometric" trefoils of the east walk (1297-1314) and the "decorated" curvilinear work of the south (1320s) and west walks (1330-1350s), to the vertical compartments and intersecting arches of the Perpendicular style seen in the last eight bays of the north walk which were built from 1382-90s. As Richard Fawcett has argued, not only does the cloister offer exemplars of tracery designs, it probably provided a model for the construction of windows in parish churches all over Norfolk (Fawcett 1996, 210-227).

<sup>3</sup> Haward 1995,14-19 and Heslop 2005, 250.



*Above: architectural terms used to refer to parts of the church windows*

there was a general resistance to re-using identical designs. Either the masons enjoyed injecting variety or, more likely, the sponsors of the building work saw the detail of the tracery patterns - and as I will argue in this chapter, the interior and exterior mouldings framing them - as a way of making their church or windows individual and distinct. If it sounds fanciful to attribute much significance to subtle differences of interior mouldings, then it is helpful to see the church lit by candles, as it would have been in the fifteenth century. After dark, the sharp shadows created by the flames highlight the mouldings in a remarkably effective way. The luminous imagery characteristic of the glass by day switches to a glittering black background and the eye is drawn instead to the crisp lines and details of the stonework. In fact, far from the different mouldings representing inconsequential variations, it may be that the medieval eye was attuned to the aesthetic subtleties of church window design in the same way that the twenty-first-century eye is sensitive to lines of a sports car or a smart-phone.

Detail aside, it is however, the vertical compartments in Perpendicular tracery which had the greatest impact on glazing styles and priorities. Whether by design or accident, these compartments were far more suited to the display of human and celestial forms than the more complex shapes created by the earlier curvilinear and reticulated patterns. So, as well as the presentation of large figures in the main window compartments, Perpendicular tracery provided an opportunity to include ordered ranks of smaller figures in the upper lights. The favoured subjects for these lights were series of saints and of angels, each framed within his or her own panel. Angels were often depicted playing musical instruments or singing - a heavenly orchestra, which was sometimes

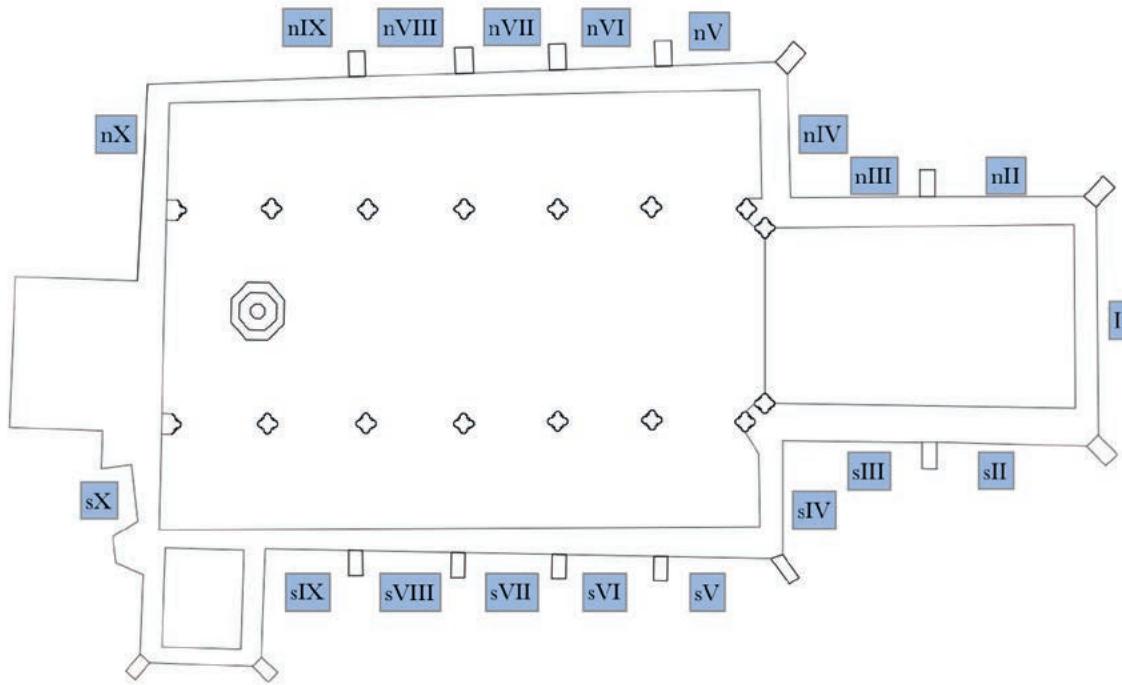


Figure F: plan of Wighton church showing the numbering of the nave and chancel windows

supported by more angel musicians or attendants carved into the hammer beams or attached to the rafters and purlins of the roof. The model for such hammer beam angels was the new roof at Westminster Hall constructed in the 1390s - though the angels here did not play or hold instruments. The first angel roof in Norfolk was almost certainly at St Nicholas chapel in King's Lynn. It was erected about a decade after Westminster by some of the same masons who, as we have seen, were later to work at Wighton (see above, pp. 26-27). Perpendicular-style traceries could also place an emphasis on horizontal lines. Embattlements might be carved in the long transoms, as in the east chancel window and in super transoms in two of the nave windows - sVII and sIX - at Wighton (see Fig. F, above, for the numbering convention of the nave and chancel windows). Or they may be expressed more broadly around the body of the church through the use of a series of short, stepped transoms (local examples are at Fincham, Weasenham and Burnham Norton) helping to evoke the idea of a fortified heavenly realm whose ramparts were manned by the battalions of angels depicted in the glass.

Unfortunately, while the traceries survive, our knowledge of how those battalions were constituted and the details of medieval glazing schemes generally, is nearly always uncertain. The losses caused by iconoclasm and the inevitable ravages of time on a fragile medium held in place by a vulnerable lattice of lead, have been heavy. That which does survive has often been mixed up, restored (sometimes well, sometimes badly), re-installed in different windows and sometimes formed into decorative displays of random fragments. The best survivals are, more often than not, from the tracery lights and clerestories. These, being higher, were less vulnerable to accidental or deliberate damage, though they too have



*View of the south side of the nave at Wighton illustrating the variation of tracery designs in the aisle windows and consistency in the clerestory. The Perpendicular style emphasised vertical lines and created a series of regular compartments at the top of the window.*

sometimes been re-set in the main lights so that they can be better seen. Despite these uncertainties, we can generally divine the original imagery in the clerestories and traceries with more confidence than we can the contents of the main lights. We do know that in well-funded, high status churches where significant amounts of original glazing has survived - such as St Peter Mancroft in Norwich and East Harling in south Norfolk - many, if not all these lower lights were peopled with depictions of Biblical narratives and figures. The situation in parish churches with more modest funding may well have been different. Very rarely a bequest in a will might be specific - such as that which instructed an image of the Trinity to be installed in a window at South Creake in 1451 and where the image itself seems to have survived (see p. 53). More often it is clear from the size of surviving figures that they were originally set in a main light, though it is almost never possible to know how much of the glass in any one church depicted imagery or was instead glazed with decorative quarries (small painted devices, usually diamond-shaped, and displayed in a lattice of glass and lead), or merely with white (clear) glass. Some antiquarian accounts provide evidence of lost imagery and, sometimes, original locations, but they rarely give much detail and are often confused. More usefully, these early historians also occasionally recorded dates, donors and inscriptions, and, most commonly, heraldry. This raises two other questions: how were the windows and the glazing paid for and who decided what was to be represented?

## Sponsorship and design

At Wighton, the cellarer's rolls once again provide an extraordinary insight. They record the cost (£4 10s) and a date (1455-56) for the glazing of two of the chancel windows; though whether these comprised two of the four side windows or included the great east window isn't stated.<sup>4</sup> It is highly likely that the cellarer also paid for the other three chancel windows (see p. 43), but we

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<sup>4</sup> NRO DCN 1/2/61 and 61B.

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are left in documentary darkness when it comes to the nave, which would have been paid for by the parishioners. Potential sponsors for windows and glazing are unlikely to have been different from those who paid for other parts of the building and its embellishment - from the font, or the chancel screen, to an entire aisle, or the roof itself. But the opportunities for a discreet and ostentatious display of wealth and piety may even have made painted glass particularly appealing, if expensive - names and heraldry could be at eye level and tributes paid to favourite saints and, on sunny days, the devotional offering would have seemed to glow with divine approval. The cost, of course, also equated with status. Eight of the donations towards the rebuilding of Swaffham church in the 1450s refer to the glazing of windows, with one recorded as giving an amount specific only to the glazing: Thomas and Cecely Blake "gaffe in money to the glasyng of the stepull wyndow V£".<sup>5</sup> And it wasn't just the glass that could be customised according to a sponsor's taste, the stonework could be too. Although the jambs and mullions are all of identical size and profile in the nave at Wighton, in all but one of the windows (the exception is nX) the most prominent design features differ. In the range of five windows along the south aisle alone, there are four different tracery patterns and three differently-shaped arches, as well as differences in the profiles around the rear arches of the window reveals inside the church. A similar degree of variation is evident in the south aisle traceries at Swaffham where, as Heslop notes, no two designs match.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, variations in mouldings of these rear arches are rarely remarked on, but - in most cases at least - can hardly be accidental. As we shall see, there are several different styles at Wighton. The obvious explanation for all these differences is that particular windows were specified and funded by an individual patron as part of a sponsorship package which would have often included both the glazing and the stonework.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, as we shall also see, window sVIII at Wighton has head-stops depicting what must surely be portraits of the husband and wife who paid for it, or in whose honour it was commissioned and installed.

Such portraiture and other bespoke stonework would obviously have added to the cost and so to the prestige of the patron, as would the customisation of tracery which required any new templates or additional labour for the masons. And if the glazing area was bigger than standard, with more figures and glass required - as is the case with a stilted arch as opposed to a more pointed one for example - that also would have been more expensive. But there were certainly other, less-costly opportunities for sponsorship in which glazing could be paid for independent of the selection and installation of the tracery. This pattern of patronage would have enabled the church wardens or building committee to ensure that the windows were fully glazed and decorated. Apparent examples of such an arrangement include two of the donations at Swaffham which specified the glazing of individual windows in the clerestory. Here the tracery

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<sup>5</sup> The donations were recorded by the rector, John Botright from 1454 in the *Swaffham Black Book* (Rix 1954, 20-24). The Blake donation is specified on page 24.

<sup>6</sup> Heslop 2005, 266.

<sup>7</sup> Another key reason why window design might vary is that windows were retained or reset from an earlier period, or were inserted later than others. At Wighton, however, the continuity of the fabric around the windows clearly suggests that they were built into the church at the same time as the new nave and chancel walls were raised - with the possible exception of nX (see pp. 58-59).

of all the windows is identical and not therefore part of a “package” combining both tracery and glazing. Meanwhile, a legacy from William Docking in 1415 left £20 towards making the tower and to glaze a window by the altar of St John the Baptist on the south side of Docking church. Again, all the window traceries on the south side of this church are identical. And, in 1451 at South Creake, the John Norton who left five marks to glaze a north aisle window with an image of the Trinity (perhaps that now in nVIII) may have been making a final installment of a payment which covered the entire cost of the installation and glazing of the window. However, it seems more likely that he was paying a one-off contribution towards glazing the range of four new windows with identical traceries which had just been installed in the north aisle.<sup>8</sup>

Whether this Trinity might have been a “random” personally-chosen element in a fairly arbitrary composite arrangement of religious imagery, or whether he was choosing to pay for one part in a predetermined scheme can’t be known, and it isn’t clear to what extent a vicar, rector, or ecclesiastical sponsor has had influence or input over the design and commissioning of such imagery in the nave. The question was recently discussed at length by Claire Daunton in 2009, and also by David King in 2012, and it is certainly true that, as King puts it, “multiple and overlapping circles of influence” must have been at play.<sup>9</sup> But the likelihood too, is that money talked and that the individual or guild who paid for the glazing would have had some say over its content - whether they were selecting the life of a patron saint or a favourite, or apposite Biblical scene.

An example of how sponsorship of windows at one church was organised is Long Melford in north Suffolk - one of the most spectacular parish churches in the country and one for which we have one of the best recorded schemes of medieval stained glass from the 1460s to the 1490s. The nave glass was largely destroyed, but there are detailed antiquarian accounts of the clerestory glazing - some of which has survived and is now reset in the aisle windows. As Woodforde has pointed out, the glazing of the 19 clerestory windows on the south side was paid for by parishioners and their names and images were recorded in the glass. The windows were divided in two by a transom and it seems to have been possible to sponsor either a half or a whole window - though whether the cost of the sponsorship was restricted to the glazing alone, or needed to include an element for the stonework isn’t clear. We do know that the entire north clerestory was paid for by a local entrepreneur, John Clopton. He chose to display figures of his friends and family and, of course, himself.<sup>10</sup>

There are many other examples of windows and glazing paid for by individuals, families or guilds - their identities confirmed by legacies, or more rarely by the survival of donor portraits, heraldry, initials or inscriptions which either request prayers for the soul or otherwise confirm the name of the sponsor. At Ringland near Norwich, for example the names of at least three couples - R[-] Gylys, Robert Bende, John Gunton and their wives remain in the five clerestory windows which

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<sup>8</sup> Cattermole and Cotton 1983, 267, 244 and 245.

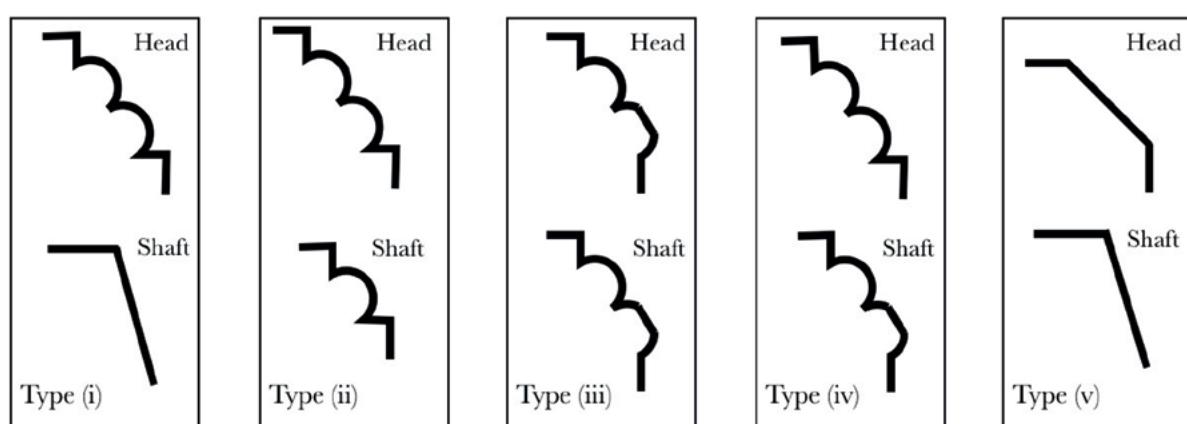
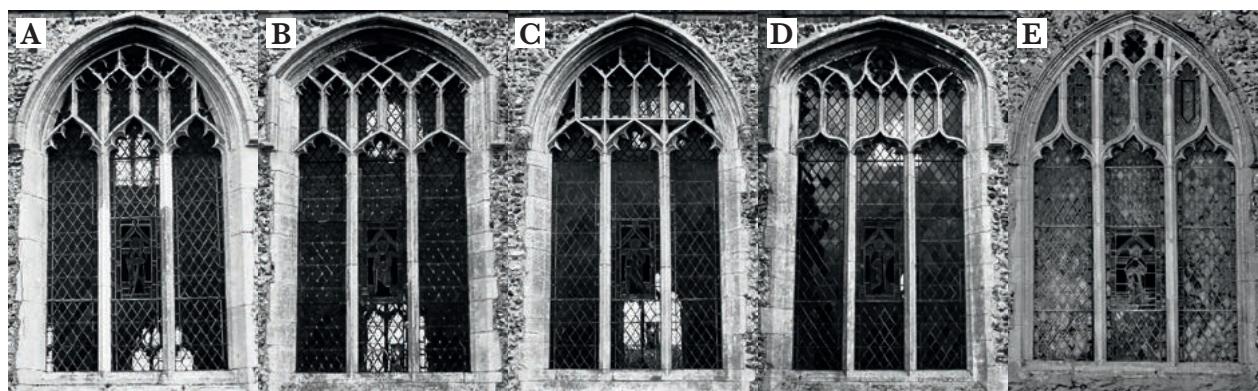
<sup>9</sup> Daunton 2009, King 2012, 354-359.

<sup>10</sup> Woodforde 1950, 74-127.

**Table 6: Differing types of tracery and rear arches of the nave windows at Wighton**

South aisle	Tracery type	Rear arch type	North aisle	Tracery type	Rear arch type
sIV	A	i	nIV	A	vi
sV	A	i	nV	A	i
sVI	A	ii/iii	nVI	A	i
sVII	B	iii	nVII	A	i
sVIII	C	iv	nVIII	A	i
sIX	D	iii	nIX	A	i
sX	C	i	nX	E	v

*Figure G*



*Top:* Table 6 sets out the variations in tracery and rear arch design in the Wighton nave windows.

*Centre:* Fig. G illustrates those variations with examples of each tracery design together with cross-sections of the heads and shafts of the different rear-arch mouldings which are on the inner reveals of the windows. Type (vi) - which is the same as type (i), but has a rounded rather than a peaked arch - is not illustrated.

*Left:* The head-stops depicting a woman and a man on the exterior of window sVIII. These are most likely portraits of donors or dedicatees.

still have medieval glass *in situ*. Antiquarian records suggest there were more names, now lost.<sup>11</sup> Woodforde also cited four Norfolk churches where inscriptions were recorded by antiquarians which apparently confirmed that the glazing of individual windows was commissioned by parish guilds. At least three of the guilds at Ringland - those of the Holy Trinity, the Blessed Virgin Mary and of St Peter - contributed to the glass there; the word “gild” can still be seen beneath an image of the Trinity. At Beeston-next-Mileham, where the glass was dated 1410, it was the guild of the Virgin Mary who had paid for it, at Hingham, the “maidens of the town”, at Martham, the John the Baptist guild, while at Surlingham, there is a record of the inscription *Orate pro animabus fratrum et sororum Gilde St Salvatoris* [pray for the souls of the brothers and sisters of the Guild of the Holy Saviour]. Woodforde also recorded inscriptions to guilds in Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire and Suffolk and notes that the church of St Michael-le-Belfrey at York has glass showing a religious guild of boys and girls with their chaplain.<sup>12</sup>

This also raises the possibility that chaplains may also have been sponsors in their own right, which, given what we know about the wealth and influence of chaplains in the village, may have been the case in Wighton (see pp. 152-153). But while we don’t have inscriptions or documentary evidence for individual sponsorship of windows in the nave at All Saints, as we shall see later in this chapter (p. 82) we do have a fragment of glass seeming to show a donor figure with a church window behind him (plate 43 - this and all further plate references are on pp. 214-240). And the number and variety of customised traceries and window reveals appears to confirm a pattern of patronage whereby several individuals, groups or guilds sponsored different windows or, where they are identical, a series of windows. It is a pattern consistent with a funding model which will be proposed in Chapter Four and, as we shall see, with the likely distribution of wealth, social status and social structures of the village at the time. The attendant implications need to be considered before the surviving glass is reviewed.

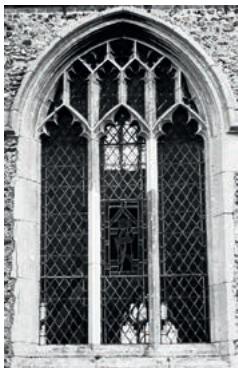
## Difference in the nave windows and traceries at Wighton

Table 6 (left) summarises and locates the differences between the nave windows at Wighton. Those differences are enshrined not only in the variation in tracery patterns which are illustrated in Fig. G (also left) - and which obviously represent the most prominent design features - but also in the profiles of the rear arches, the decorative mouldings which line the edges of the window reveals which are illustrated below the traceries. In all there are five different tracery types in the nave and a similar number of rear arch designs and they might be combined in various ways to make additional points of difference. A descriptive entry for each type and combinations of types follows.

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<sup>11</sup> Woodforde 1950, 68-71.

<sup>12</sup> Woodforde 1950, 72-74.



## Type A

This tracery design is used in nine of the 14 windows of the nave, including all but one on the north aisle. It is also the model for two other windows of type C. However, variations in the rear arch moulding in sVI (see below) and in the shape of the rear arch in nIV means that only seven of the nine windows can be considered identical. It is possible that one patron chose this tracery design and paid for all, or a significant number of the windows in which it was used. It was not uncommon for a single

sponsor to pay for the whole of a north aisle: John and Catherine Chapman did so at Swaffham, and the fabric and window traceries of that aisle are consistent.<sup>13</sup> At Wighton there are three high-status medieval burials in the north aisle which could indicate the graves of patrons (the brasses identifying them have been lost) and a member of the wealthy Gigges family requested burial here in 1506 (see p. 149), suggesting a family connection with the aisle. Alternatively any one or more of the five parish guilds might have been involved. Equally possible, the tracery may have been the standard design selected by the mason-architect, church wardens or steering group responsible for the rebuilding of the nave, the design variations in other windows representing the intervention of individual sponsors.

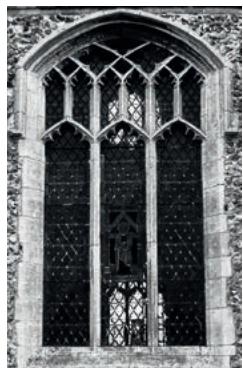
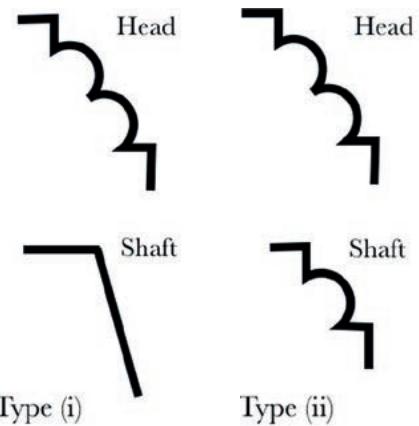
There is nothing grand, showy or unusual about the tracery used here, especially compared with the intricate patterns which some of the Wighton masons had already installed at Litcham and Lynn and were to work on in the chancel at Walpole St Peter. The Wighton design follows a fairly simple Perpendicular pattern with a three-light window topped by an obtuse two-centred arch, a shape which closely reflects that of the arcade arches which are aligned directly with the windows.<sup>14</sup> The tracery incorporates four main panels with elongated trefoils filling the slips on either side and a central quatrefoil badge or rosette at the peak of the window which is flanked by two smaller trefoils. This has the effect of levelling the tops of the tracery panels so that they are all of the same height and a series of four figures can be displayed in an even rank. The design is very close (though not identical) to the windows which several of the masons had recently installed at East Winch, though here ogee archlets were used, instead of the simpler peaked variety at Wighton. A similar arrangement is used in several other churches, all within ten miles of Wighton. Under stilted four-centre arches in both North and South Creak (south aisle) and at Holkham, a flattened arch allows the creation of a rank of six panels. On a larger scale at Cley-next-the-Sea, Field Dalling, Stody and Blakeney, a similar style arch is used so that eight tracery panels of even height can be incorporated. In each of these churches the surviving glass depicts series of saints or, at Blakeney, angels. The potential for a visual hierarchy is also created because the upper quatrefoil is large enough to include another full-length figure - a Resurrection

<sup>13</sup> Rix 1954, 20 and Heslop 2005, 266. The window tracery in the easternmost bay is different, but this was once part of a separate All Saints chapel.

<sup>14</sup> The radius for each side of the arch is taken from a point to one side of the centre line at an obtuse angle.

is depicted at Cley - while the two flanking quatrefoils are used to depict accompanying angels. An example of an alternative tracery arrangement in a three-light, two-centred arch is that which was used for the nave at Little Walsingham, at East Barsham, and also for the clerestory windows at Wighton. Here the two central tracery panels rise to the full height of the windows and so also create the potential for a hierarchy. At East Barsham the surviving glass demonstrates how this hierarchy might be exploited - a Visitation is depicted, with the larger figures of the Virgin Mary and St Elizabeth each flanked, at a slightly lower level, by a smaller musician angel.

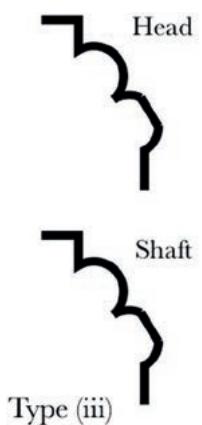
**Interior moulding:** The heads of the rear arches of nV-nIX, sIV, sV and sVI are defined with two ovolo mouldings which die away into the reveal at about the springing point of the arch [type (i) - right]. The shaft design of sVI is problematic - the shaft of [type ii - right] is on one side of the reveal, the shaft of [type iii - below] on the other. It is hard to explain this inconsistency. Perhaps there were left over sections of the more complex [type iii] design which were used up to avoid wastage. The arrangement in nIV is also curious - the rear arch has the same mouldings as (i), however the arch itself is not peaked, but deliberately formed into a continuous round which I have designated [type (vi)]. It is not shown here but illustrated in plate 17.



### Type B (sVII)

This window holds the central position in the south aisle. It has a segmental pointed arch which forms the same high-shouldered frame as D, but there is a hard turn where it meets the vertical of the jamb. It is also the only design without a central rosette at the top of the window. Instead, a network of diamond-shaped apertures is created by an elegant arrangement whereby the super mullions curve at the same angle as the head of the window so that they form two over-lapping arches. Along with type D, it also differs from the other designs because the flatter arch creates enough room for six tracery panels, rather than four. This suggests that they may have been chosen at least partly in order to display an extra two figures, which would allow a donor to feature, for example an Annunciation, or a Coronation of the Virgin in the two central panels, with two flanking saints or angels on each side.

**Interior moulding:** A distinctive and elaborate variation of types (i) and (ii) is made here. The two mouldings continue from the arch, reflecting the hard turn at the point at which they turn vertically downwards. The inner moulding, which has a flattened rather than a rounded bead, is different from the outer bead and it stands proud at the edge of the window reveal [type (iii) - right].



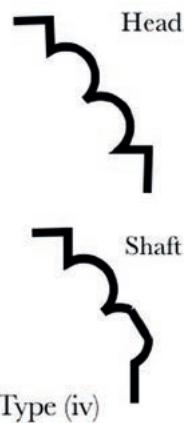


### Type C (sVIII and sX)

The tracery pattern in these two windows is essentially the same as A, except for the addition of an embattled super transom which links the peaks of the main light canopies and so creates a level platform. If this is interpreted as the ramparts of heaven, it perhaps makes it more likely that angels - guardians of that place - were depicted in the panels. Window sVIII is unique in the church in having two head-stops - of a man and woman - at the bottom of the exterior hood moulding (p. 54). Window sX has the same tracery

as sVIII, though the moulding of the rear arches differs, and there are no head-stops on the exterior.

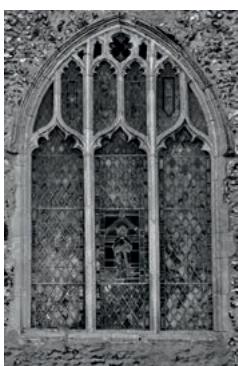
**Interior moulding:** In sVIII, the mouldings [type (iv) - right] are a combination of two other designs. Around the head they form two ovolos - as in type (i) - but as they continue down the jambs of the rear arch they are modified to the same shapes as in type (iii) - one becomes a half round bead, the other also a half round but with a flattened top. The moulding around sX is as for sIV and sV and all the type A windows in the north aisle [type (i)].



### Type D (sIX)

Here, room for six tracery panels has been created by a stilted four-centre arch - a slightly different solution from that used in sVII and one which creates a smoother curve at the shoulder of the window. This emphasis on curves extends further - from the ogees used for the archlets and for the tops of the two central tracery panels, to the rounded tops of the outer four panels which mirror the flow of the upper corners of the windows. It is an exceptionally elegant design.

**Interior moulding:** Curves are also preferred in a moulding which continues around the full frame of the reveal - the more rounded corners of the arch making a smoother transition to the vertical. The beads which frame the reveals are the same as the design around sVII [type (iii)].

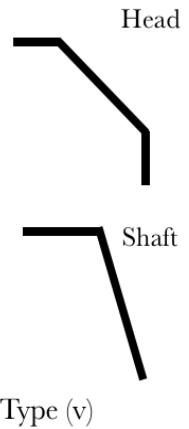


### Type E (nX)

This window is the only one in the north aisle to vary the sequence of otherwise identical type-A window traceries. There are several key differences with A - and indeed with all the other windows in the nave - and there are some signs in the surrounding flint-work that suggest it may have been inserted at a later date - though modern re-pointing has made it hard to tell. Certainly, while all the other windows in the north aisle have large stone fragments (almost certainly the broken up tracery from the early nave) arranged like arch bricks above the windows, nX has none.

The interior reveal is also set uncomfortably close to the engaged column of the arcade, which may also be symptomatic of a later insertion. And, at 60cm, the lights are 8cm wider than all the others, giving the window a different feel and creating a more sweeping curve to the arch. In fact the two centres for the radii are so close to each other that it is almost semi-circular. This extravagant curve is countered by the two mullions which run right up to the head - the only window on the ground floor of the nave to use this arrangement. It means that instead of the line of the mullions giving way to the tracery pattern, a strong vertical emphasis is maintained which creates a definite frame around the two central tracery panels. This is not an unusual design - the pattern is used at East Winch, in the north aisle and chancel at Great Snoring, the chancel at Little Walsingham and just down the road in the tower window at Wells-next-the-Sea. It is also used - in a larger version - in the Wighton chancel windows and - in rather smaller form - in the Wighton clerestory. But in nX, in the clerestory and at Little Walsingham - as far as I can tell from a photograph taken just after the 1961 fire [plate 74] - a subtle and elegant variation is adopted. While the mullions finish flush with the outer frame of the window, the tracery itself is set back by about 2cm - a detail which is used both on the outer and the inner face and which further emphasises the verticals in the window.

**Interior and exterior moulding:** This window has no ovolos or rounds, just a simple chamfered arch moulding and a square (or nearly square) edge on the jambs [type (v) - right]. There is a sloping interior sill, too - a feature which is only otherwise found in nIV. This is also the only window in the church where the exterior moulding continues the detail framing the arch right down the jambs to the sill. The exterior jambs on all the other windows are finished with a simple chamfer.



## Window heights

Another point of difference among the nave windows is the height at which they are installed. The sills of all the windows along the north and south walls are set at roughly similar heights from the current floor level (they vary between 120 and 140cm), and the window heads also align. But the windows in the east and west gables of the aisles (nIV and nX, and sIV and sX) are all set slightly differently. The heads of nIV, nX and sX are all higher than the main range of windows in each aisle - with which only sIV aligns. And the sills of all the windows are also higher than the norm - they vary from 160-180cm. In the case of nIV and sIV this was clearly to allow for the installation of an altar - slots have been cut in the lower edges of the reveal to accommodate a structure of some kind. Altars would always have faced east, so it is not clear why the sills of the two west-facing windows - which do not have slots in them - were set higher.

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## Conclusions

In summary, although at first glance the tracery patterns suggest there are five different specifications among the 14 nave windows, once the detailing of the reveals and rear arches are taken into account, seven of the windows can be considered to have unique designs. A “norm” (Ai) is established all along the north side of the north aisle and some of the differences from this are very prominent - notably in windows nX, sVII and sIX. Others - such as sVIII and sX - reveal more subtle variations but were clearly designed to be different.

Meanwhile, in common with the vast majority of fifteenth-century Norfolk churches, the tracery and decorative mouldings of the north and south clerestory windows at Wighton are identical to each other; the only variation is in the east window above the chancel arch which looks as though it may have been inserted later. But variation in stonework at that height would clearly make less impact compared with that at eye level. Why, sponsors may have thought, spend money on additional detail which would have been hard to detect?

The most credible explanation for the differences in the aisle windows is that they were specified by different patrons, whether individuals, families or groups such as parish guilds. The exact number of sponsors can't be determined; some may have commissioned more than one window, others may have shared in the funding of one or more. Neither can we know why a particular variant or design was commission, though it makes sense to assume that a decision to choose a bespoke tracery pattern was influenced by the imagery to be painted on the glass. And - at least during daylight hours - it is that glass which would have been the biggest differentiator between the windows and which would have struck the eye most powerfully. It was through that imagery that communication with other parishioners, with the saints, the angels and the Almighty was assumed to take place. Any differences in stonework would have been greatly enhanced by what was represented in the glazing, so it is the imagery portrayed in these lights and panels to which we now turn.

## A survey of the Wighton glass

### Scholarship

Christopher Woodforde's book, the *Norwich School of Glass-Painting in the Fifteenth Century*, which was published in 1950, is the starting point for modern scholarship focusing on medieval stained glass in Norfolk.<sup>15</sup> It is structured around detailed surveys of five churches - St Peter Mancroft, East Harling, North Tuddenham, Ringland and (over the border in Suffolk) Long Melford - but makes references to and comparisons with, glass at many other locations, including Wighton. His accounts tend to be more descriptive than analytical, with a particular focus on the "quality" of the execution: he admires "the excellence of drawing and colouring coupled with the vigour and liveliness of presentation" for example, but he does also assign some specific characteristics to Norwich work. These include the pattern resembling heads of barley used on platforms and grounds - which he calls "barleycorn design" - and the "seaweed" pattern used on drapery and background cloths, as well as devices used on quarries, in roundels, around borders and so on.<sup>16</sup> His analysis of the glass at Little Walsingham - made before it was lost to fire - was published separately in 1937 and has proved an important source for this chapter.<sup>17</sup>

Over the last 40 years and more, Woodforde's research has been extensively developed by David King. His most substantial work is his 2006 book on the glazing of St Peter Mancroft, which includes a detailed account of glass-making in the city during the fifteenth century. He has also published several scholarly articles on glass in Norfolk churches, and is responsible for the survey of the county for the CVMA website (cvma.ac.uk) which is in progress. His work - especially on the glass in a group of north Norfolk churches which includes Wighton - is referred to extensively throughout this chapter. The other key study is Richard Marks' *Stained Glass in England during the Middle Ages*, published in 1993. It remains the standard work on the techniques of the craft and provides a general picture of patronage and iconography on a national scale, as well as making specific reference to the glass at Wighton which will be discussed below.<sup>18</sup> Claire Daunton's recent unpublished PhD on patronage and iconography of stained glass in late medieval Norfolk provides useful context,<sup>19</sup> while Ann Eljenholm Nichols' *The Early Art of Norfolk* - an exhaustive directory of medieval imagery in all media, including painted glass - has been invaluable in researching thematic connections between imagery in different churches.<sup>20</sup>

Central to David King's work has been his identification of what he argues is the most important glass-producing workshop in Norwich during the middle decades of the fifteenth century - the "John Wighton workshop" established by John Harrowe - aka Wighton - who came from the

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<sup>15</sup> Woodforde 1950.

<sup>16</sup> Woodforde 1950, 161-164 and chapter VI in general (161-182).

<sup>17</sup> Woodforde 1937.

<sup>18</sup> Marks 1993.

<sup>19</sup> Daunton 2009.

<sup>20</sup> Nichols 2002.

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village and who is generally referred to in surviving documentation by that toponym. It was he who received the £4 10s for glazing two of the new chancel windows at Wighton (see p. 18), an extremely rare reference connecting an individual glass-maker with a glazing project at a specific church. This, and other detailed work on painting styles, repeated motifs and some documented relationships between individual glaziers, has led David King to identify and characterise the workshop, and to attempt to identify which glass it produced.

In his biographical notes on John Wighton, King has focused on his life in Norwich; however documentary research undertaken for this thesis has revealed further details about his origins. He seems to have come from a modest background. His father, or perhaps grandfather, was probably the Simon Harrowe (more often referred to as Simon Horrowe) who is recorded in the Wighton manor court rolls between 1384 and 1406. He is not recorded as holding any manorial office and the most significant mention of his name comes in September 1385, when he was renting a small parcel (1½ acres) of land in Wighton with another villager, John Letherman.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, John's sister Agnes married into an undistinguished Wighton family, the Rookes. They appear occasionally in the court rolls but, like Simon Harrowe, no-one from the Rooke family was recorded holding office of any kind in the village. In 1406 and 1413, presumably shortly after she married, Agnes Rooke paid four small fines of 2d and 3d for re-grating ale and bread - indicative of a housewife attempting to supplement a meagre family income (see p. 139, footnote 34).<sup>22</sup>

John himself kept up some connections with his birthplace. In 1423, he is recorded as taking over a lease of 2 acres of land in Wighton, paying a fine of 7s 6d to do so.<sup>23</sup> But he had probably left Wighton and started his apprenticeship in Norwich under the tutelage of the glazier, Thomas Dorham in 1404, when aged about 14. He became a freeman of the city in 1411, the first step in a highly-successful career which lasted until 1456 and during which he was appointed city treasurer (1435) and warden of the glaziers' craft (1445-46 and 1447-48). His daughter married into the gentry<sup>24</sup> and, in 1453, he was appointed Alderman for the ward of Colegate or Fyebridge and was referred to as "Gentleman and Alderman".<sup>25</sup> By the time he died in 1457 he had amassed a considerable fortune - sufficient to leave cash bequests totalling more than £60, including £10 to the fabric of his Norwich parish church, St Mary Coslany, several bequests to local churches, hospitals and friaries, plus a small legacy of 6s 8d to his sister in Wighton.<sup>26</sup>

This accumulated wealth and impressive rise in social status seems to have been unique among Norwich glaziers at the time - the only other fellow glass-maker to achieve the rank of Alderman

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<sup>21</sup> RHA WCR September 26, 1385.

<sup>22</sup> RHA WCR February 19, 1406 and January 12, 1413.

<sup>23</sup> HHA Wighton Deeds, Bundle 2, number 3 - a fuller discussion of this document is on p. 118.

<sup>24</sup> According to Harrowe's will, her husband was Robert Hayham, gentleman - NRO NCC Brosyard 84.

<sup>25</sup> King 2006, 138.

<sup>26</sup> NRO NCC Brosyard 84.

was William Heyward - half a century later, in 1505.<sup>27</sup> But despite his high profile, we know little about how John Wighton's workshop might have operated. Our knowledge of the trade in the city relies on references in cathedral and other account rolls, wills, court rolls and property transactions which record the names of about 36 men who were described as glaziers or glaziers' apprentices in Norwich during the fifteenth century. Most of them probably worked out of small workshops, with perhaps one master and a couple of assistants, and they would have offered a service which covered the cutting, painting, leading, transportation and installation of the glass.<sup>28</sup> There was no exclusive glaziers' guild as there was in London and York. In Norwich, glaziers were part of the guild of St Luke along with, among others, brassiers and painters - in fact there are records suggesting glass painters also worked in other media such as brass etching and panel-painting.<sup>29</sup> Some may have been freelance or peripatetic - especially once released from their apprenticeship to become journeymen - and there may well have also been workshops or individuals operating in smaller towns (or even villages) outside Norwich.<sup>30</sup>

What evidence there is suggests that John Wighton conducted his business on a somewhat larger scale than the norm. For example, there are records - all dating after 1453 - of Wighton retaining at least four apprentices, so he is likely to have had several more in the 30 or 40 years before this. David King also identifies the Dutch glazier William Mundeford as part of Wighton's "entourage" and he feels that Mundeford's wife Helen, who was a glazier too, must also have worked for Wighton. Both were mentioned in his will and, in the same document, one of their sons was described as Wighton's servant.<sup>31</sup> But another Mundeford son was apprenticed to a different glazier and so, while they clearly confirm some close links, these references also suggest that we need to be cautious both about how those links worked and about making assumptions over what constituted a workshop.<sup>32</sup> Thus, while many of the connections which King makes are insightful and valuable - and are referred to throughout this chapter - his characterisation of a Wighton workshop and the corpus of work which he attributes to it, is open to question. Indeed, there is clearly a risk of circularity in his arguments, a risk which has been heightened in recent years by King's steady expansion of the number of glazing schemes which he has attributed to its production line.

The wide scope of David King's research and the intricacies involved in analysing such a complex web of attributions and connections across dozens of glazing schemes, make it unfeasible to address in detail the entire corpus of work which he attributes to John Wighton in this study. However, as well as making attributions, he has also estimated dates for the glass at

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<sup>27</sup> King 2004, 131. Here King also refers to "Alderman Thomas Wighton", but Thomas appears to be a misprint for John.

<sup>28</sup> Marks 1993, 33-36.

<sup>29</sup> Marks 1993, 42; and King 2004, 132.

<sup>30</sup> Marks 1993, 40.

<sup>31</sup> King, 2006, 138.

<sup>32</sup> Marks 1993, 46.

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Wighton and several other churches of interest here. One of the key concerns of this chapter has been to review the evidence for those dates, a process which has resulted in a proposal for a significant revision of some of his estimates.

But first it is necessary to address another question which has received a certain amount of academic interest because of a perceived relationship between a group of female saints in the sIV tracery lights at Wighton and others in nearby Norfolk churches. The debate was begun in 1950 when Woodforde, rather briefly, drew comparisons between the sets of virgin saints in the churches at Cley, Field Dalling, Martham, Pulham St Mary and Wighton, which he felt were “allied in subject-matter as well as in style”. He also mentioned a St Agatha at St Peter Hungate - which is clearly linked to those at Cley and Wighton - and suggested that all this glass might have been produced by a single workshop using a standard set of references.<sup>33</sup> David King’s analysis followed in 1974 when he stated that the female saints at Wighton, Cley, Field Dalling, Martham, and Stody, plus the St Mary Magdalene in the Burrell Collection and the St Barbara in the Metropolitan Museum in New York (both of unknown provenance) “form an interesting group, not all by the same hand, but using common design sources and characterised by a particular type of voluminous drapery with many rounded and convoluted folds, and by the relatively soft shading of the faces, with large round eyes”.<sup>34</sup> He went on to add the figures of St Elizabeth and the Virgin Mary at East Barsham to this group,<sup>35</sup> and he also detected a stylistic connection between these female saints and the series of apostles at Weston Longville, St Peter Hungate, Wighton and Field Dalling.<sup>36</sup> These connections were later to be subsumed into King’s proposed corpus of work by the Wighton workshop. But, in the meantime, in 1993, Richard Marks argued that the female saints at Wighton, Cley, Stody, East Barsham and Field Dalling, plus the two museum panels, had been made not by a Norwich workshop, but by another based elsewhere in Eastern England. He felt that all the figures which he cites “share common design motifs” with Norwich glass “but the figure style differs in some respects”.<sup>37</sup> His arguments detailing the rationale behind this attribution to a single workshop were not set out in detail and remain open to question, especially with regard to the figures cited at Field Dalling and Stody. But Marks’ assertion that they were not made in Norwich seems entirely ill-founded. He does not appear to be aware that the Cley and Wighton St Agathas share a common reference with the St Agatha at St Peter Hungate [plate 9] and there is no reason at all to suppose that the patrons at Hungate would have looked outside a city which was famous for its glass to commission its windows. So Christopher Woodforde and David King must surely be correct in concluding that the glass - or at least that at Wighton, Cley and Hungate - comes from a Norwich workshop.

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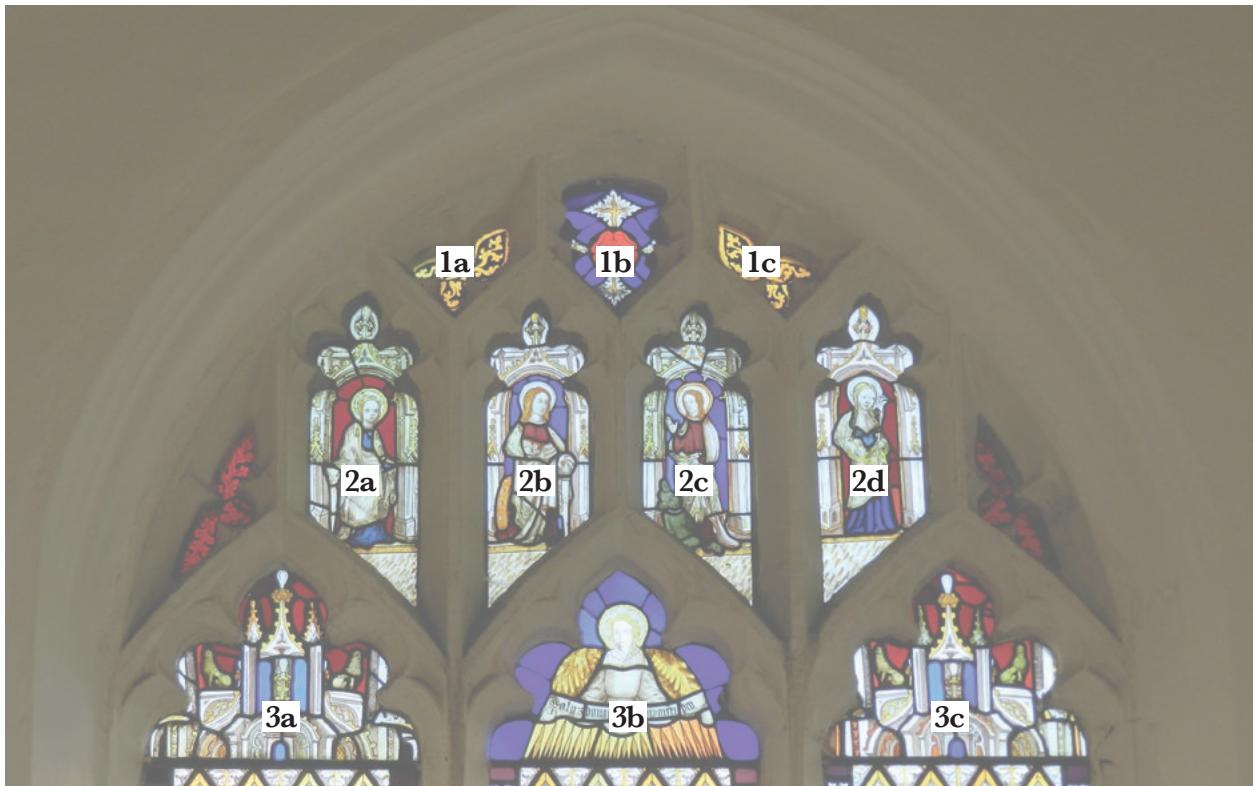
<sup>33</sup> Woodforde 1950, 178.

<sup>34</sup> King 1974, 9.

<sup>35</sup> King 1974, 10.

<sup>36</sup> King 1974, 20.

<sup>37</sup> Marks, 1993, 198. Marks actually cites the figures at Wighton as those in nIV. This presumably represents a typing error, or omission since he is clearly referring to the female saints in sIV. The nIV figures are male apostles and it is the women in sIV which are closest in style to those in the other churches.



*Above: the upper part of window sIV, Wighton showing the numbering of tracery and main lights.*

There is a high chance that David King is also right that this workshop was indeed operated by John Wighton or his associates. After all, we have a document connecting him to glass in the Wighton chancel, he had continuing links with his home village and the success of his business is likely to have been a source of local repute and pride. Ultimately, there is no proven link between him and any particular piece of surviving glass, but we can be confident that he was an obvious choice for those who wanted to glaze new windows in Norwich and north Norfolk between the 1410s and 1450s. Certainly, even as the wider economy of the region stuttered in the 1420s and then stalled in the 1440s, he was still attracting plenty of business, and he clearly rode the wave of a flourishing art form and a booming industry. The timing of his career and the implications for the dating of the glass will be considered at further length later in this chapter. First follows a survey of the surviving medieval glass at All Saints.

## The glass

As already noted (Fig. F, p. 50), windows in this survey are numbered from the east, according to standard notation. The upper tracery lights are numbered 2a-2d, from left to right; the main lights numbered 3a-3c, also from left to right (see above). It must also be noted that virtually all the glass in Wighton church appears to have been re-installed, probably in the nineteenth century; so we cannot automatically assume that any is in its original location. There has been significant restoration work too, including numerous replacement panes, some repainting and some plain coloured-glass insertions. However, original medieval glass can generally be distinguished from replacements, not

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only by assessing the style of painting, but by the pitting and discolouration which affects the exterior face, and for eight of the key panels discussed, diagrammatic guides to the original and replacement glass have been provided [plates 6 and 22]. In the course of my research I have also discovered more than 100 painted glass fragments stored in tins and cardboard boxes in the church chest and not previously recorded. These have been sorted, matched, photographed and included in this survey. While there is no absolute proof that the glass came from the Wighton church windows, there is no reason to believe otherwise. They appear to derive from about 20 different figures or decorative features, some of which are clearly connected with the glass which is in the windows, some of which offer evidence of other glazing schemes. In the following window-by-window survey, I have considered any of these loose fragments which appear to match or to be directly relevant, alongside the glass which is in place. Fragments which appear to be from lost glazing schemes are assessed under a separate heading.

Note too that the word “cartoon”, as used throughout this chapter, refers to one of the elements used in the production of stained glass images. Marks describes the process whereby a full-size master drawing was laid out on a tracing table and used to produce replicas of exactly the same size and incorporating glass pieces of the same shape.<sup>38</sup> The details of the drawing might vary slightly because of the particular traits of an individual artist, or for other more practical reasons such as a change in an instrument of martyrdom in order to depict a different saint, or the need to reverse the direction of a gesture or a glance. Other elements, such as the use of coloured glass, might also be specified differently from one version of an image to the next, but it will always be clear when the same original cartoon has been used and re-used as a template. As well as the use of tracing tables, there is also evidence that paper or parchment patterns and images, both of which would have been much more adaptable and easier to store for future reference, were in use by glaziers from at least 1443 and very probably earlier.<sup>39</sup> A system such as this would explain some of the links discussed below where workshops seem to have used images not for straight tracing, but for artistic reference, so producing a version of an image rather than an exact copy. In this way a less exact copy might be produced - of a different size, or with a particular adaptation, or different lead lines perhaps. If there is no direct tracing involved, it is clearly harder to be sure that similarities between two images in different churches are strong enough to indicate a common workshop origin. However, as we shall see, the similarities between two images in two different churches are sometimes so strong, that it is clear that they were produced either by the same artist or come from the same workshop reference and do not simply stem from the conventional forms and styles of the time.

Churches mentioned below with glass which is linked to Wighton are located on Map 4 (p. 207), and the connections cited will be summarised in Table 7 at the end of this chapter (p. 96). As already stated, all plates referred to are on pp. 214-240.

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<sup>38</sup> Marks 1993, 31-34.

<sup>39</sup> Marks 1993, 34.

## The east aisle windows

### Tracery lights in sIV [plates 1-6]

Four female saints stand on low platforms and are framed by architectural canopies which are somewhat simpler in style than those surrounding a similar row of four apostles across the aisle in nIV (see below). The female figures stand rather higher in the tracery panels than the men - the tops of their heads roughly in line with the lower cusps of the stonework, while the apostles all stand clearly below this line. The women are of comparable size to the apostles however, and the height difference in the setting is determined by a deeper foreground which, in all cases, is a modern replacement. The fictive architectural surrounds have been heavily restored with many replacement panes [plate 6], but 2a is all medieval except for the red in-fill glass and a single pane representing the left-hand base of the arch. The upper parts of 2c (apart from the central trefoil at the top of the arch) are also fifteenth century. As a result we can be sure of the original details and that all these panels were made for lights of this size and shape.

#### 2a St Faith [plate 2]

Apart from some minor repairs, the figure is complete. King states that she carries a sword or stake, and is “based on the same cartoon” as an unidentified female saint in sVII 2c at St Margaret’s, Cley [compare plates 12 and 13]. Here, eight female saints, set in slightly bigger lights and framed by a surround of more complex fictive architecture, are arranged in four pairs.<sup>40</sup> In fact, as currently displayed, 2a may be an amalgam of two of the Cley saints. The body is indeed that of the saint in 2c at Cley, but on her head she wears a garland similar to that worn by St Cecilia in the last panel at Cley (2h) [plates 15 and 16]. However the Wighton head, which appears from the pitting visible on the exterior side to be original, is not a convincing fit with the body - the shoulder tresses do not

align with the hair. (A possible explanation is that this is the original head of the Wighton saint now in 2b - which has been replaced with a modern version - or of another female saint whose body has been lost.) When overlaid photographically, it is clear that the two figures are exactly in proportion, however the Cley saint may be larger than the Wighton one, and there are differences in the painting styles.

For example, the Wighton artist uses cross hatching on the robes, while the one at Cley uses a tint and has applied more detail to the decorative hem of the robe. Woodforde interprets the implement which the Wighton saint is holding as a sword (left), but does not suggest an identity.<sup>41</sup> Nichols conjectures Anastasia based on the idea that the virgin martyrs here - and in other churches, including Cley - may survive from a representation of the five female martyrs memorialised in the Canon of the Mass (Agatha, Lucy, Agnes,



Left: sVI 2b, Cley (detail).

Right: sIV 2a, Wighton (detail).

<sup>40</sup> King 1974, 13.

<sup>41</sup> Woodforde 1950, 177.

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Cecilia and Anastasia). However, Anastasia was martyred by fire and Nichols cannot cite a single positive identification of her anywhere in Norfolk - whether on glass, wood, plaster or in stone.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, very close comparison with the figure at Cley where the saint is clearly holding a sword reveals that in the Wighton version of the figure, the handle of her symbolic instrument is offset and the blade does not draw to a point in an even way: one edge is straight while the tip is angled to a point from the other edge (see previous page). So this must be a saw with the teeth obscured by the leading. The figure must therefore be St Faith.

## **2b St Catherine (?) [plate 3]**

Only seven pieces of this panel are medieval, however they are enough to establish a right-facing figure with long curly blonde tresses who is holding a sword. The restoration as St Catherine is conjectural, though Nichols detects a “trace of ermine” on the original shoulder garment which would be consistent with Catherine’s royal status.<sup>43</sup> Nichols also notes that she is usually depicted with a sword held by the hilt with the point resting on the floor (as here) as well as a wheel, and lists 43 examples of St Catherine in Norfolk medieval glass, which make her easily one of the most popular saints. However, examination of the glass under magnification shows that the image has deteriorated in such a way as to give a false impression - the marks which Nichols took to indicate ermine tails are in fact the remaining traces of painted drapery folds. So while the restorer’s conjecture is not entirely unreasonable, it is certainly conjecture.

## **2c St Juliana or St Martha [plate 4]**

The head, the drapery over the left shoulder and the lowest section of drapery are replacements. The devil held on a chain or leash is usually an attribute of St Juliana, but could also be St Martha - a devil-leading female saint is clearly named as Martha on the chancel screen painting at North Elmham. The composition of this arrangement at Wighton is broadly similar to a version at Martham<sup>44</sup> but, while the demon and the hands of the saint are in similar positions, each saint holds the chain in a different hand and the Martham saint holds a book, which does not appear at Wighton. There are also marked differences in the execution of the devils and of the drapery. It is also easy to over-emphasise similarities between the two because the restorer modelled the head at Wighton on the medieval head at Martham.

## **2d St Agatha [plate 5]**

The setting is entirely modern, but the figure is complete apart from the lowest section of drapery which is also a modern replacement. The exposed breasts and the flesh hook indicate St Agatha and a very similar version, though executed rather differently, survives at Cley [plate 10]<sup>45</sup> - and, though damaged and fragmentary, at St Peter Hungate in Norwich [plate 9].<sup>46</sup> In these two

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<sup>42</sup> Nichols 2002, 315-316.

<sup>43</sup> Nichols 2002, 173.

<sup>44</sup> It could also be that the parishioners of Martham were more drawn to Martha than Juliana.

<sup>45</sup> sVI, 2a.

<sup>46</sup> Chancel east window (I).

churches the same cartoon and pattern appears to have been used for the section containing the head, breasts and flesh hook, and possibly the right shoulder, but while the Wighton version has similar designs and proportions to the others, fewer pieces of glass were used and many details differ slightly - the angle, number of prongs, shape of the shaft and the neck of the flesh hook, for example. The way that the head and drapery has been painted is also in distinct contrast to the style at Cley. As in 2a, the obvious conclusion is that different artists from the same workshop were at work in Cley and Wighton. The Cley and Hungate versions may be by the same artist, though the damage to the Norwich glass makes it hard to tell.

### **Summary**

The depiction of virgin martyrs in the upper tracery lights is relatively common, especially in this part of Norfolk. As well as those at Cley, Nichols lists several more examples within a ten mile radius of Wighton which survive or have been recorded by antiquaries. We have already mentioned those at Field Dalling (five saints) and Stody (three, of which one is no longer extant). There were also six at Sharrington (no longer extant) and further afield at Salle, Guestwick and Martham as well as those at Pulham St Mary. There were potentially many more if one allows a single surviving saint in a church to be indicative of a series. Nichols attempts to find some consistency in the groupings, but partial survivals and problems of identification ultimately raise more questions than they answer.<sup>47</sup>

What we can say for sure is that a group of female saints, such as that at Wighton, was not unusual and would have been appropriate to several devotional causes - including for example an aisle chapel or altar dedicated to the maidens of the village, as also seems to have been the case at Hingham (see p. 55). However, while the Wighton figures are clearly made for window lights with the same dimensions as those they are currently set in, questions remain *vis-a-vis* the arrangement and original location of the four figures. Three of the female saints turn to the right and only one to the left. (Even though 2b is so heavily restored, it is clear that the surviving drapery derives from a figure facing right and the design detail and style of execution are the same as the drapery worn by the other figures in the group). This suggests that they were not all originally set in the same window and so we may be looking at a partial survival of eight or more female saints who were displayed in pairs across the upper lights of two or more adjacent nave windows. Alternatively two of the saints might have flanked an Annunciation or a Visitation depicted in two central panels

### **Tracery lights in nIV [plates 17-22]**

Four male figures are framed by architectural canopies of which only the example in 2d is medieval (apart from a replacement pinnacle on the lower right hand side and the coloured inserts); 2c has a few original fragments, but 2a and 2b are entirely modern settings based on 2d [plate 22]. The figures stand on low platforms, all of which are modern inserts with similar designs to those in sIV.

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<sup>47</sup> Nichols 2002, 315-316.

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## 2a St Peter [plate 18]

The figure is complete apart from the lowest section of drapery, which is a replacement. St Peter - identified by his full tonsure, key and book - stands higher in the light than the other four figures but, because of the replacement section, this height cannot be relied upon. However, he is uncomfortably wide for the architectural frame which - although in this panel is entirely nineteenth century or later - is copied from and to the same scale as the medieval versions in 2d. St Peter's S-shaped pose is unduly exaggerated by the way the restorer has positioned the feet so that he stands with his weight on his left leg, his right foot drawn slightly upwards. His head also sits rather awkwardly on his shoulders and has probably been over-inclined. The drapery is executed with notable attention to detail. St Peter wears a mantle trimmed with gold and, beneath it, a robe embellished with a seaweed design with a particularly unusual and distinctive curling fold just below the neck.

## 2b St Andrew [plate 19]

The body and head are complete. The saltire indicates St Andrew and - as St Peter, above - he is uncomfortably wide for the frame which is another modern replacement designed to match 2d. Also like St Peter, the drapery is depicted with exceptional care, with the same seaweed pattern on the under-gown and *fleur de lys* variants on his mantle. Of particular interest is the fragment of seaweed pattern which can be glimpsed behind the saltire. This was a design commonly used to depict a cloth of honour, so he must have been originally set, not under an architectural canopy, but against such a cloth. There are examples of such a cloth behind the apostles at, for example, Stody, Norwich Guildhall and Great Massingham.

## 2c St Bartholomew [plate 20]

The dark blue glass makes it hard to see, but from the reverse side it is clear that the two main sections of coloured glass and the one covering the left shoulder are replacements, as is the lowest section of drapery and the left sleeve and cuff, which are skilfully painted by a restorer. The flaying knife is medieval and connects correctly with an original section of blue glass immediately below it and the drapery panel above. So while it is possible that the restorer has conflated elements from more than one figure, the probability is that this is St Bartholomew - holding his instrument of martyrdom in his left hand and pointing upwards with his right hand.

## 2d Unknown saint [plate 21]

The entire figure and most of the architectural surround are medieval. David King suggests that the saint, who carries a closed book in his right hand and gestures downwards with this left, may be Paul, another apostle and thus an appropriate companion for the other male saints in 2a-2c.<sup>48</sup> However, it would seem from the different settings - two against cloths of honour, two in architectural frames - that the four were not originally placed together, so they should not be considered as a group (see summary, below). Credible alternatives might be the apostle John, or possibly the evangelist, Mark, both of whom are associated with books. The identification

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<sup>48</sup> King 1974, 13.

must remain unsure, but the figure certainly seems to have been made by the same workshop and probably the same artist as St Bartholomew. The halos are different, but the detail around the collar and the three shadow lines beneath the eye, as well as the irises, pupils and liner along the eyelid have been drawn in the same way as in figure 2c. Two other figures - the head of the resurrected Christ at Cley and an unknown saint at Great Massingham - display similar characteristics and may be by the same hand [compare plates 23-26]. The reverse of the piece depicting the barleycorn floor is inscribed with the date 1993.

### **Summary**

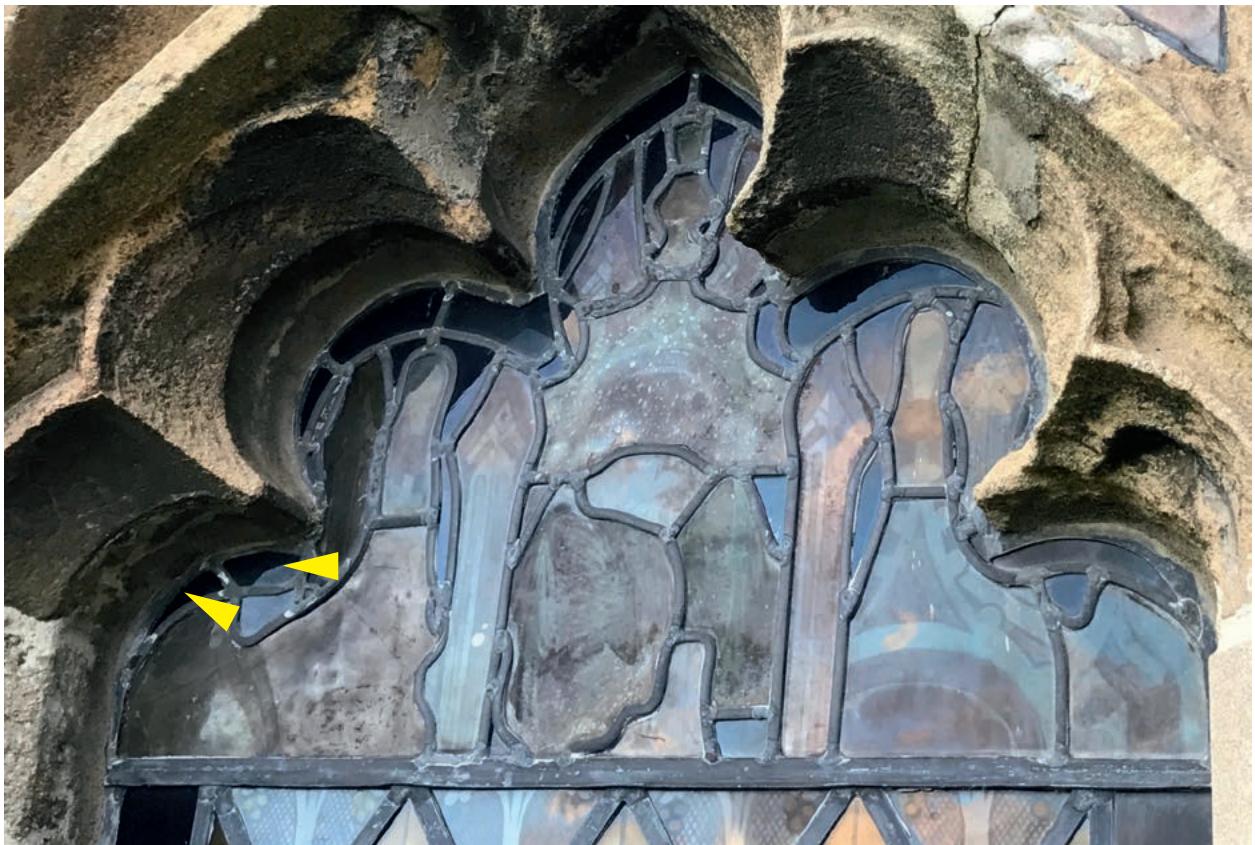
As with the virgin saints in sIV, the four figures as currently positioned, look unbalanced: three gesture to the right and one, unusually, faces directly forwards. The style of the faces and the drapery is also very dissimilar, suggesting a different artist or workshop produced St Peter and St Andrew to that which made St Bartholomew and the saint in 2d. That coloured glass is used for the gowns of the latter two saints further adds to the lack of balance and increases the likelihood that two different commissions were involved. However, the substantially complete architectural setting of 2d was clearly made for tracery lights of the same dimensions. Meanwhile the saints in 2a and 2b, if set against cloths of honour, would also have fitted in lights of the same shape and size. So, while a setting in this tracery type is reliable, the current positioning of the four figures must be incorrect - as far as we know, a series of saints such as this, if displayed in the same window, would invariably have been depicted against matching backgrounds. So the most likely explanation is that what we see here is a partial survival of at least two groups of apostles, one set against cloth, the other under canopies. It is possible that they were commissioned at the same time, and come from two adjacent windows - a window with eight tracery lights at Field Dalling depicted eight apostles, while at Stody, there are six apostles flanking a Coronation of the Virgin. Possibly at Wighton, there was even a series depicting all 12 apostles across three windows in the north aisle. Such series, though not necessarily arranged in that number of windows, were common in Norfolk. Nichols cites lost examples recorded by Blomefield at Fersfield, Foulden, Gardboldisham and Swardeston - and, by Rye, at Lyng. A full fifteenth-century set of 12 apostles at Pulham St Mary is still extant, though arranged in the upper lights of a single nave window and in a consistent style and setting.<sup>49</sup> At Wighton, the differences in style, background and glass colour suggest that the two pairs of saints were more likely to have been independent commissions for two different windows.

### **Canopy Heads**

In nIV 3a [plate 27] and 3c only the two central fictive canopies, the left hand canopy in 3c, some of the rounded pinnacles and the bodies and wings of the two eagles are medieval glass. The restorer's adaptations are logical but, unless more information was available when the restoration was made than is available now, apparently conjectural. They are probably based on knowledge of other main-light canopy arrangements such as the one at Swanton Abbott [plate 28] which features an eagle

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<sup>49</sup> Nichols 2002, 129-130.



Exterior view of nIV B1 at Wighton showing how modern in-fills (examples indicated by yellow arrows) have been used to fit medieval pieces to the shape of the stone cusp. Note that, for ease of comparison, this photograph has been flipped (i.e. it is a mirror image).

with a central half dome and two subsidiary ones. The shouldered profile of the left-hand canopy in 3c certainly seems to have come from the head of a light, but possibly not the one where it is now mounted. The illustration above shows how in-fills have been used to adapt it to the shape of the cusp. It is hard to be sure, because the piece is so fragmentary, but it may have originally been made for an archlet with a lower profile. The only examples of this in the church are in sVII and sIX. Differences between the three half domes also need to be considered. The central examples in 3a and 3c have been painted on the same shape piece of glass, so were almost certainly traced from the same cartoon. However, there are subtle differences in the execution of architectural details across both canopy heads - the shape of the cornice and the texturing of the ceiling on the underside of the domes, for example, and the interior profile of the roundels and triangles at the apex of the arches. Some are given an illusion of perspective, others not. This may simply be the result of hasty or careless workmanship, but it is possible that they were produced as part of different batches for different windows.

Across the aisle, in sIV 3a and 3c [plate 29] only half a dozen pieces are medieval, including the central canopy in 3a, which seems to have been formed from two halves which don't quite match. There is no coving on the right hand side of the ceiling and the detail around the inner arch is slightly different. (The restorer of 3c has inadvertently copied the mismatch exactly, as though it were deliberate). The small fragment of a window head immediately to the left of the central canopy is also medieval and probably correctly positioned. All the *lions sejants* are original and

may well have come from this, or possibly another canopy head. There are fragments of similar lions in Cley and Warham [plates 33 and 35] and three complete examples in nII at St Peter Hungate including that shown in plate [34]. A piece of loose glass at Wighton [plate 31] and a one set at Warham [plate 32] suggest that there may have been other examples of animals set on pedestals.

Overall, the style of the architecture in both canopy types is similar to that surrounding the female saints in sIV, though on a larger scale to suit their position at the head of a main light. What can be deduced from the existence of such canopies? There is too little glass surviving from main lights in Norfolk windows to be sure, but given that figures in tracery lights are, as in Wighton, very often set under architectural canopies, it is reasonable to infer that canopies served a similar function in the main lights too and that these - often elaborate - designs were set above figures, and were not simply marooned at the heads of window lights filled with quarry glazing. As we shall see (p. 80), one of the few apparently intact main light schemes was recorded at Little Walsingham. Here the canopies were installed above pairs of angels.

### **Scroll-bearing angels: nIV 3b and sIV 3b [plates 38 and 39]**

A good deal of confusion has been introduced by the restorers here. The heads of the central lights of both nIV and sIV contain similar compositions - the head, wings and torso of an angel bearing a scroll. In both examples, the wings are replacements and probably do not reflect the original arrangement - in nIV the new wings do not match the original feather tips protruding at the extreme bottom corners of the scroll. In sIV, the head and tippet have been restored to look like the medieval versions in nIV. There are several surviving examples of very similar torsos of angels bearing scrolls - in nIII at Great Snoring [plate 37] and at St Peter Hungate [plate 36], where four such angels bearing scrolls are in the heads of the lights of nV and three in the east chancel window (though one of the nV 3d angel is smaller and has a different pose). There is also an isolated head with tippet at Warham [plate 40], which must be related to the group. When overlaid photographically, the depictions of these angels in the four buildings are not identical, however they are many similarities and the glass patterns used can be matched. The pattern shape of nIV at Wighton is the same as that of the three angels in the east chancel window at St Peter Hungate [plate 36] - the central part of the scroll is included on the same piece of glass as the torso. The sIV version at Wighton uses a shallower piece of glass so that a lead line is needed to join to the scroll along the bottom of the torso. This is the same pattern as used at Great Snoring [plate 37], and for the four angels in nV at Hungate (an example is shown below, p. 92).<sup>50</sup> The position and execution of the three hook-shaped folds in each sleeve, the line of the central seam of the robe and the gathering at the waist are also extremely similar and indicate that the artists in Wighton, Hungate and Snoring were copying from a common reference.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Three other scroll-bearing angels which are in somewhat different style also survive at Great Snoring, one of which is discussed below (p. 96).

<sup>51</sup> Only two folds are depicted at Great Snoring, but the comparison is still convincing, especially since the tippet and head are clearly from the same cartoon as used at St Peter Hungate.

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In all, three different artists were probably involved:

**Hand one:** the deterioration of the Snoring example makes comparison difficult, but the heads of the Snoring and Hungate angels [plates 36 and 37] share the same thick, clearly-defined hair with tight, inward curls; slightly drooping eye lids; and thin necks.

**Hands two and three:** the angels at Warham and Wighton [plates 40 and 41], with their wider lower lip, similar linear detail around the eyes,<sup>52</sup> hatched halos and shading, are close in style and clearly based on a reversal of the same reference or cartoon. The differences are not definitive, but they are enough to suggest that they are not by the same hand - the curly hair of the Wighton version is executed in a much freer, less intricate manner, the face is rounder, the brows arched lower, and there is a distinctive vertical line on the right side of the mouth, which is not seen at Warham. The common reference, however, is clear.

In summary, the angels seem to represent examples of production by a workshop which employed at least two, and probably three different hands. We can also be confident that the Wighton angels must have been originally installed in the heads of two of the main lights of either the nave or the chancel - since this was clearly the location of the angels at Hungate and probably Great Snoring. Comparisons with other scroll-bearing angels may also help explain their significance in the original glazing schemes. Each of the angels at Wighton holds a scroll incorporating the same text: *Salus honor & virt[us] o[mn]i pot[est] n[on] ti deo* [Salvation, honour and power be to almighty God]. The text is from the Apocalypse and was sung as a response at Matins on the feast of Saint Michael and all angels (September 29):

*Factum est silentium in cælo,  
Dum committeret bellum draco cum Michæle Archangelo.  
Audita est vox millia millium dicentium:  
Salus, honor et virtus omnipotenti Deo.  
Millia millium ministrabant ei et decies centena millia assistebant ei.*

There was silence in Heaven  
When the dragon fought with the Archangel Michael.  
The voice of a thousand thousand was heard saying:  
Salvation, honour and power be to almighty God.  
A thousand thousand ministered to him and ten hundreds of thousands stood before him.

It is conceivable that there were once two series of five or six angels bearing scrolls representing the complete text at Wighton and that only two extracts, both the same, happen to have survived. However, there are also two surviving angels at Martham which also bear scrolls reading the same extract [plate 42] and there are no known survivals of any other part of the text in Norfolk. So it seems much more likely that this verse was specifically extracted and re-iterated.<sup>53</sup> A possible

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<sup>52</sup> The paint is degraded with age, but a comparison can still be made.

<sup>53</sup> There are antiquarian records of another angel at Martham who was holding a scroll reading *Gloria i- excelsis deo* (Woodforde 1950, 138 citing B.M.Add. MS. 23,035, f.48).

explanation for the link with Martham stems from the fact that it was also appropriated to the cathedral cellarer. Perhaps the cellarer commissioned the same texts for the two chancels - the first commission from cellarer John Lynn who paid for the Wighton chancel to be glazed in 1455-56, the second from a later holder of the office, Richard Salthouse, who paid for Martham in 1468-69.<sup>54</sup> That - as we shall see on pp. 93-94 - would make the Wighton angels much later than the examples at Great Snoring and Warham, though, if John Wighton himself were one of the artists, it must be considered a possibility since he worked from 1411-57. More likely, however, the matching texts are co- incidental.

## The west aisle windows

### **Musician Angels [plates 46-49]**

Some caution is needed when assessing the four angels playing lutes in the upper lights of sX because, apart from the angel in 2c [plate 48] which is complete, restorers have made several interventions which are not evident at first glance, viz:

2a [plate 46]: Both feet have been redrawn.

2b [plate 47]: The lower section - the legs and wing tips below the skirts - is a restorer's replacement.

2d [plate 49]: Half of the left foot has been replaced.

However, enough original glass survives to make the following comparisons.

**Formal similarities:** All the angels are based on the same cartoon (2b is reversed and so plays left-handed). All use a quill plectrum with a pen holder's grip and all have bare feet, feathered bodies and six wings - a pair each on the back of the shoulders, the upper arms and the waist. All also feature an unusually long and distinctly crooked little finger shown against the fret (though it is not quite so obvious in 2d) [plate 52].

**Formal differences:** There are minor variations in the details of the tippets, belts, diadems and halos. The double-points on the diadems worn by three of the angels are rare. Usually there is only a single cross at the front of the headdress, as in 2b where the angle is also based on a slightly different template - while the glass sections are comparable in size and shape with those used for the other angels, the top section of 2b is missing the side notches which have been cut in the others, more of which below.

**Variation in colouring:** All except 2b have some traces of yellow (gold) colouring and although much may have been lost, the application seems to have varied. The angel in 2c [plate 48] may have had yellow wings, hair and tippet, while 2d has the most extensive remains and they appear to indicate an original colour scheme which included a pair of yellow wings and another with alternating yellow and white feathers, plus yellow/gold trimmings on its tippet and belt. The double-pointed diadem is also yellow. The coloured-glass skirts may identify two of the angels as seraphim (red skirts) and two as cherubim (blue).

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<sup>54</sup> Saunders 1930, 198-199.

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**Stylistic differences:** The way the feathers, hair and the facial shapes and features are described show distinct differences in each of the four angels, suggesting that they may have been painted by different artists. For example, the high brows and small eyes of 2d are very different from the others, as are the smaller, rounder features and large pupils of 2a. Angel 2b - different from 2a, 2c and 2d in several distinctive ways - also differs in execution. While the elements of the drawing are similar, it has not been accurately traced from the same cartoon in the way that the other three have - the posture is slightly more bent, the tippet is described more simply, as are the feathers on both wings and body. The tab-like feathers above the waist and the hatched shadow lines are also unique to this figure. Also, the lute is clumsily rendered so that the strings, neck and pegs are all out of alignment.

**Fragments:** The well-preserved and substantial fragment of the torso of a fifth angel [plate 50] was also found among the loose fragments discovered in the church chest. It too plays a lute and is traced from the same cartoon as the other musician angels but has no tippet - just a collar - and no trace of yellow paint. The head and part of the left shoulder of a sixth angel (which doesn't match the torso fragment) is set in nX 1d [plate 53]. Close examination of this head suggests that there is a viol, rebec or vielle on its left shoulder, with part of a bow also showing - as with angels at Besthorpe and Warham, for example [plates 54-55]. Its eyes and facial features are reminiscent of those of the angel in sX 2a and also of an angel in nII 2c at Little Walsingham - see below and plate [58]. Finally, part of the head of a seventh angel [plate 51] was also found in the church chest. This seems to have an architectural background and must be part of a different scheme, though it is comparable in scale to the other six.

**Location:** The angels in sX are clearly no longer in their original locations because not only are the figures apparently too narrow for their current settings, but there are notches cut near the top of the glass panels in 2a, 2c and 2d. These can only have been made so that the section would fit between the pairs of stone cusps towards the top of a tracery light. The gap between the cusps in the nave windows, where the angels are set currently, is too wide for these notches to have been necessary, however the dimensions of the clerestory windows are a perfect fit.<sup>55</sup> Meanwhile, the angel with no notches (2b) fits well in the central clerestory panels, if set below the cusps. The proposed arrangement is illustrated in plate [56].

### **Summary**

There is evidence of six - possibly seven - musician angels at Wighton which were originally set in the clerestory. The implication is that there were most likely many more - possibly the whole clerestory was peopled with them as seems to have been the case at St Mary's, South Creake,

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<sup>55</sup> The clerestory tracery lights are 133mm wide and the glass pieces on which the angels are painted are 127mm wide - allowing just enough room for a lead seal around them. The notches near the top of the glass pieces narrow the width of the pane to 89mm - which would also allow the glass to fit neatly in the space between the lower pair of stone cusps at the head of the clerestory tracery lights. These are 95 mm apart. The upper cusps are much closer together (38mm) but there is sufficient headroom (57mm) for the top part of the glass - which protrudes 50mm above the notches - to fit in place. Lastly, the height of the angel panels is 356mm and there is just enough depth to accommodate the glass vertically. These measurements were made and verified by the author when scaffolding was erected on the aisle roofs in August 2017.

7 miles from Wighton, where 12 angels still survive in the clerestory tracery lights of church. These are not musicians - they have hands raised in praise - but there are other examples of fifteenth-century musician angels in, for example, the clerestories at Trunch and North Elmham.<sup>56</sup> The fact that the same references and cartoons were used for the surviving Wighton angels but that different hands were at work is also consistent with this conclusion, suggesting that several artists may have been at work on a commission for a significant number of angels at the same time. As well as the lutes and viol, other types of instruments were probably depicted. The 200 medieval musician angels that Adrian Rose has identified in the windows of 49 Norfolk churches, play some 20 different instruments, including harps, lutes, viols, trumpets, bagpipes, organs and harps.<sup>57</sup> The most numerous - as at Wighton - are the lutanists: there are 68 in 26 churches. There are also 54 harpists in 29 churches and between them the lute and harp make up more than half of the accompanying instruments.<sup>58</sup> So it is likely that Wighton had some harpists to balance out the instrumentation.

### Angels on wheels [plates 64, 65 and 66]

Both of the central tracery lights in nX (2b and 2c) display two angels restored with some insertions of pieces of medieval painted glass originally from other figures. The key elements are apparent: they are based on reversed versions of the same cartoon, have hands raised with palms open in praise, naked legs and torsos, and six wings - two showing behind the head, two dropping from the elbows and two gathered from the waist and folded across their nether regions. Each stands on a pair of wheels which are joined by a short axle. (In 2b [plate 64] the piece depicting the angel's left heel and shin and the upper part of the wheel is a - poorly done - replacement.) As well as these two angels, a substantial fragment of a very similar head and torso [plate 66] was found among the loose glass - though there

are no surviving legs or wheels for it. The principal difference between the three versions is that 2c [plate 65] wears a diadem with one cross, while the others have three crosses.<sup>59</sup>

There are strong connections between the painting style of the fragment [plate 70 - detail] - which is the best preserved of the three - and angel heads at Warham [plate 68], St Peter Hungate [plate 71] and Great Snoring [plate 69] where, in the border of the central light containing the head, there is also a fragment of what must be an angel's foot standing on a wheel (left). In this case the



<sup>56</sup> Rose 2001, 208 and 216.

<sup>57</sup> Rose 2001.

<sup>58</sup> This figure includes 12 angels playing instruments which he denotes as lutes/gitterns. A gittern is generally smaller than a lute with more of a pronounced tear-drop shape to the sound box. During the fifteenth century both were generally plucked with a quill plectrum. It can be hard to tell them apart in sketches of this sort.

<sup>59</sup> The diadem of the angel in 2b [plate 64] has been clumsily restored, but it appears to be comparable with the three-peaked version worn by the *ex-situ* angel [plate 66]. An angel in a main light at Bale (5 miles away) has a three-peaked diadem, but they are very rare indeed.

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foot is located on the axle, while in Wighton it is on the wheel rim. (There is also one - in very different style - standing on a rim in the nII tracery lights at Hungate). Angels standing on wheels derive from the four cherubim described in Ezekiel 10, 1-22 and they were relatively unusual in medieval art. So it may be that it is more than just a co-incidence that they can be found in Wighton, Hungate and Great Snoring - three churches whose glazing schemes are similar in several other ways. Nichols, who does not list the Snoring fragment, cites only seven other locations where they appear in fifteenth-century painted glass in Norfolk.<sup>60</sup>

In Ezekiel the wheeled angels are described as having four wings, but there is no consistency in the Norfolk representations, where they may have two, four or six. The naked torsos at Wighton trouble Nichols, who compares them with the depiction of the rib cages on figures in mortuary scenes in resurrection tableaux. She speculates that two different figures may have been conflated by the restorers.<sup>61</sup> But this cannot be. The heads of both the *ex-situ* angel and the one in 2b are painted on the same piece of glass as the naked torso, so no such conflation would have been possible. They also have feathered wings clearly emerging from just behind the shoulders - which is not common among cadavers. What is more - and Nichols does not seem to be aware of this - the same cartoons were used to depict a series of medieval angels in the chancel at Little Walsingham which were lost in the 1961 fire. Photographs taken before the church burnt down are reproduced as plates [72, 73 and 75]. So, the figures at Wighton are certainly not cadavers and along with their fellows formerly at Walsingham, they are apparently unique in their nakedness among medieval Norfolk angels. Given these parallels, it seems likely that the Wighton examples were arranged in a similar way to those at Little Walsingham - an arrangement which will be discussed in the following section.

Also set in the same window (nX), above the angels in 2b and 2c, are several fragments of angel wings including one [plate 64] painted on orange-yellow glass and with the feathers delineated in more detail than those on white glass (both the rachis - the central shaft - and the vanes are scratched into the paint). This coloured section is probably connected with two *ex-situ* wing fragments which are also painted on orange-yellow glass, though the detail of the painting has heavily deteriorated [plate 67]. The smaller of these two wings - which appears to have a fracture line along the top - corresponds in shape and size to the lower part of one of the wings folded across the angels in plates [64 and 65] - and apparently also the similar angels formerly at Little Walsingham [plate 73]. However, the larger fragment - a longer wing, presumably once attached at the shoulder - may have come from an angel of slightly different design - or at least set out on different glass patterns.

Are the wheeled angels representative of an order of angels - perhaps one of a series of all nine? In her survey of Norfolk, Nichols identified 22 examples of (incomplete) series - including one at Great Snoring (see below) - and several isolated individual angels which she took to

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<sup>60</sup> Nichols 2002, 35.

<sup>61</sup> Nichols 2002, 121.

be representative of an order. Some of these have inscriptions identifying them, but, as she conceded, without such labels it is not usually possible to make a positive assertion that all nine orders were depicted.<sup>62</sup> And, although the musician angels at Wighton may be identified as cherubim and seraphim, they were apparently located in the clerestory. As we shall now see, it is much more likely - given comparisons with the scheme at Little Walsingham - that the wheeled angels were in the main lights at ground level.

### **Comparison with St Mary's, Little Walsingham**

Although there is now only photographic and documentary evidence to work from, the medieval glazing scheme in the two chancel windows (nII and sII) at St Mary's Little Walsingham [plates 63 and 75] appears to have been substantially intact until the church was gutted by the fire of 1961. The tower, the south and west porches, and the masonry shell of the building remained standing, and the rest of the church was rebuilt around these in 1964 as a copy of the original. Some of the glass survived the fire - notably the four musician angels in the tracery panels in nII and some of the border decoration in the main lights below them. These survivals have been reinstalled and restored with a few replacements. The south window (sII) now has only a few medieval fragments which have been reused as border decoration in the main lights, with copies of the original musician angels in the tracery panels. But photographs of the original survive [plates 72-75] and, like the musician angels, provide invaluable evidence for the arrangement of the angels at Wighton - a comparison which does not seem to have been made before.

**Musician angels:** The four lute-playing angels in the tracery lights in the north window at Little Walsingham [plates 59-62] are virtually intact<sup>63</sup> and used a similar cartoon or reference to those at Wighton, though they are larger. The positioning of the six wings is the same and they also have feathered bodies with traces of yellow paint and bare feet. There are some minor differences in the diadems - at Walsingham all are single-pointed; at Wighton three have double points. And there are differences too in the clothing - all but one of the Wighton angels wear tippets and have belts and fabric skirts, at Walsingham they are entirely feathered apart from belts and fabric cowls. The Walsingham angels also lack the plectrums held by those at Wighton. But overall it seems likely that they were produced by the same workshop, and one example in each church may have been painted by the same artist see plates [57 and 58]. Photographs of the south window at Little Walsingham (sII) - plate [72] is the best available - show four musician angels in the tracery panels arranged in two repeated pairs - each looking towards its counterpart. However, these are rather different in style, and unlike those in nII, they are all left-handed, use plectrums, are dressed in long robes and appear to have only four, rather than six wings.

**Main light angels:** It is the distinctive and unusual imagery once in sII at Walsingham which provides the most instructive comparison with Wighton. The same setting was used for each of the main lights - an architectural frame topped by a complex canopy and, above it, three musician

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<sup>62</sup> Nichols 2002, 31-35 and 292-293.

<sup>63</sup> Only the midriff, lute and upper part of the head of 2c is restored [plates 61 and 63].

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angels who were stationed on a horizontal ledge - a central harpist is flanked by two lutanists, one left, one right-handed. Beneath was a pair of angels with naked legs and torsos, standing with arms raised and palms open in adoration, with their lower wings folded across their nether regions - plate [73]. Though they can't now be measured, it looks highly likely that they were drawn from the same cartoon as those in nX at Wighton. They are certainly based on the same reference - as a comparison of plates [65, 66 and 73] confirms. The main differences are that the Wighton angels are standing on wheels and their wings are painted on white glass. At Walsingham the angels stood on a barleycorn floor and their wings were painted on orange-coloured glass - plate [75]. However, as previously mentioned, fragments of wings on orange glass exist among the loose fragments found at Wighton and one of these appears to be the correct shape for an arrangement similar to that at Walsingham - plate [67 - left hand side].

Can we be sure that the Walsingham angels reflect their original medieval composition? Woodforde, who completed his survey before the church burnt down, described them as "much restored" but goes on to say that the figures (which he calls seraphs) "with their canopies fit perfectly in their present positions and undoubtedly belong there".<sup>64</sup> The fractured nature of some of the lead lines (indicating repairs to old glass) and the similarities with the Wighton angels also suggest that enough of the original glass survived at the time they were photographed for us to be confident of the arrangement. Woodforde also pointed out that the hands of two of the angels were "pierced, blood dropping from the wounds. Blood also drops from wounds in their sides. The feet are not pierced".<sup>65</sup> He concluded: "these figures must be Franciscan in intent. In the spaces formed by the main ogees of the canopies are twelve-rayed suns, which may have a references to St Bernardinus of Siena".<sup>66</sup> The reason for this deduction is presumably that it was a seraph which endowed St Francis with his stigmata. Bernardinus, who devised the symbol IHS in Gothic letters on a blazing sun, was canonised in 1450 six years after his death, but it was the Observant Friars who came to Greenwich in 1482 who were particularly active in promulgating his cult which is too late to have influenced this glass. However, Woodforde was unnecessarily prescriptive. The suns in the Walsingham window were a common device in various forms in Norfolk medieval glass and did not contain the letters IHS. The apparent stigmata could perhaps have stemmed from the influence of the Franciscans less than 200 yards down the road. However, the church was appropriated to the Augustinian priory next door, so it is more likely that any glazing scheme in the chancel was devised by them.<sup>67</sup>

## **Summary**

The lack of stigmata imagery on the Wighton glass suggests that it served a different iconographic function to that at Little Walsingham, and one which cannot now be recovered.

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<sup>64</sup> Woodforde 1937, 27.

<sup>65</sup> Blood is just discernible below the chest wound in the left-hand angel in plate [73].

<sup>66</sup> Woodforde 1950, 144.

<sup>67</sup> The lower parts of the lights contained the royal coat of arms flanked by crowned Tudor roses, the badge first adopted by Henry VII after his marriage to Elizabeth of York in 1486. As Woodforde pointed out, however, they probably date from 1512 and were almost certainly a later insertion from another location in Walsingham. Woodforde 1937, 28.

But, if the angels were arranged in main lights as at Walsingham it would explain the original context of the two angels in nX at Wighton - plates [64 and 65] - plus the *ex situ* fragment in plate [66] and at least one of the orange wing fragments in plate [67]. If they were also capped by similar canopies, it might also explain the original locations of other Wighton fragments - the straight-topped canopy in plate [86], which is different in style to Walsingham but consistent with a similar design scheme, and the small angel's head in architectural setting in plate [51], which is similar to the flanking angels in the Walsingham canopy heads.

## Quarries

Not all medieval stained glass was figurative. A pattern of border decoration was very common and some windows were glazed partly, or entirely, with repeated motifs, usually painted on small, diamond-shaped pieces of glass, or quarries, set in a regular lead lattice. The main lights of the north chancel window at Little Walsingham are an example of this arrangement. Like those in the other windows in the nave, nearly all the quarries now at Wighton are Victorian insertions, but the nineteenth-century restorer has used a handful of surviving medieval tiles [plate 76] as patterns for at least two of these designs. These survivals are in nX which is, in all probability, their original location. One quarry, representing a *cinqe-foil* tree or bush, was almost certainly part of a central decorative scheme for a main light. The other - a diamond-shaped motif which is distorted where necessary to follow the curves of the window tracery - is a border device, also for a main light. This latter design is very similar to some of the medieval quarries which have been reset as border decorations in both the east window (I) and window sII at Saxlingham Nethergate, where there are also fragments of rod and foliage decoration which are similar to two small, loose fragments at Wighton [plate 82]. Heraldry in the windows at Saxlingham suggest that some of the surviving glass there may date to c. 1390-1413.<sup>68</sup>

While such rod and foliage border designs are common - one figures for example in nII in Little Walsingham<sup>69</sup> - I have not found quarries to match the other designs at Wighton. Saxlingham Nethergate, however, is also notable for its series of different coloured roses which provide the best match for the single example in red which survives in the rosette (1b) at the apex of nX in Wighton. Also in the north aisle (nVIII) there are also two examples of medieval foliate decoration on coloured glass, almost certainly in their original place in the slips next to the tracery lights. Seven loose pieces of similarly painted coloured glass survive - plate [79] and were clearly made for eyelets such as these in the upper lights of the tracerries of nIV- nIX and sIV-sVI. They are slightly different in design from the glass still *in situ* however, less finely described and with small open circles inscribed in the dark paint background instead of hatching. A similar technique is also used in the background to the angels' legs in sIX - though it is a common device in fifteenth-century Norfolk glass.

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<sup>68</sup> King 1974, 25.

<sup>69</sup> There are also fragments at St Peter Mancroft, Shimpling, East Harling and Martham, for example.

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## Remaining loose glass

The loose glass discovered in tins and boxes in the Wighton church chest comprises more than 150 fragments, of which about 100 are medieval and the rest Victorian. Many of the medieval fragments have traces, or are still coated with whitewash on the interior surfaces, suggesting that the images were masked with paint - presumably during the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries. About half of the fragments can be joined or matched to form bigger sections, most of which are clearly recognisable as architectural features, figures and lettering. In all, there is evidence of up to 20 different glazing schemes of varying styles. The following account covers the remaining pieces which are of significance but which have not yet been referred to in this survey.

### **Fragments of figures**

When joined together along a shared fracture line, two fragments appear to show the top of the tonsured head with a church window in the background - plate [43]. It is consistent with a donor portrait recording the installation of the glass. Given the tonsure, it could represent a donation from a village chaplain - as we shall see (p. 152), they could be significant contributors to church furnishings and fabric funds. But another strong contender is John Lynn, the cathedral cellarer who paid for two of the chancel windows in 1455-56. Part of another tonsured head also survives - plate [44] - and several other figure fragments are also extant. These include part of the cuff and long-fingered hand of another figure of similar size to the musician angels [plate 45], although not enough survives to be able to identify it positively as a musician's hand, or to detect any other gesture.

### **Inscriptions**

Fragments of three, or possibly four different inscriptions survive [plates 77 and 78]. The largest, apparently on a scroll bordered with yellow (or gold), is inscribed over three lines and begins *Qu-*, with *p[er]ea-* beginning the second line. I have not been able to identify this text, but inscriptions over more than one line are rare in Norfolk medieval glass; it is likely to have been either a biblical text or an obituary dedication specifying the donor - though these normally begin with the exhortation to pray for the soul of the deceased: *Orate pro anima...*

### **Architectural and background fragments**

Fragments of several other architectural features and backgrounds - canopies, columns and decorative borders or cloths - also survive. These are likely to have formed part of the framing devices for figures which have now been lost - plates [80-92].

### **Antiquarian evidence**

In the eighteenth century, Blomefield recorded medieval heraldry in the church windows at Wighton.<sup>70</sup> Unfortunately, precise locations are not specified and Blomefield's syntax is characteristically oblique, so it is not clear whether all the references are to the chancel, or whether, in the second two cases listed below, the nave. This is his record, together with my gloss.

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<sup>70</sup> Blomefield 1805-10, vol. 9, 208.

In all cases the arms described were most likely positioned in the main lights:

- i) In the north chancel window: “*azure*, three coronets, *or*”. These are the arms of St Edmund, patron saint of Norfolk, which are also repeated on the font.
- ii) In the south window (chancel or nave not specified) - “*gules*, three covered cups, *argent*, Argenton”. The most likely link is to John Argentine, an illegitimate son and heir of the Argenton family of Halesworth, Suffolk whose crest this is. He married Margery, the daughter of Sir William Calthorpe of Burnham Thorpe. Sir William’s family had close connections with Wighton (see p. 141) and Blomefield also records the “arms of Calthorp [sic] impaling *gules*, three cups *argent*, Argenton” in a window at Burnham Deepdale church.<sup>71</sup> Argentine died between 1412 and 1419, a date which fits well with the rebuilding and glazing of the nave.<sup>72</sup>
- iii) In “another window” - “St. Andrew, and his saltier; *azure*, three leopards’ faces, *or* impaling Pakenham; and the three Kings heads of Coloign”. If the reference is to a nave window, this could indicate the figure of St Andrew now in nIV. Or it could be another devotional tribute to the saint - his saltire is also displayed on the font. The three leopards’ faces probably indicates de la Pole, though technically the arms should include a fess. There is one marital connection recorded which might explain the impalement: Constance Pakenham (c.1505-1570) to Sir Geoffrey Pole (1502-1558) in about 1529. Any connection to Wighton remains obscure, however. If this marriage was commemorated in a window in All Saints, it must have been a later commission added to the glazing and it must have been sometime between the marriage in c. 1529 and the death of Sir Geoffrey in 1538.

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<sup>71</sup> Blomefield 1805-10, vol. 7, 10.

<sup>72</sup> MG Argentein - <http://www.medievalgenealogy.org.uk/families/arg/argchart.shtml#margery> [Accessed: 15/6/2015].

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## Dating the glazing

Dating medieval glass can be an even more perilous process than attempting to date building work. Several variables need to be taken into account. First is the potential delay in glazing a new building. The most likely time for this to be done was very soon after the roof was complete and weather-tight - though there are examples of glass going in even before this.<sup>73</sup> However, it was also possible to board unglazed windows, or cover them with canvas temporarily: Marks cites several records which show that glazing took place several years after other building work was complete and that a glazing campaign might be rolled out over a long period. The most extreme example is of two angels from the windows of Fotheringhay, Northamptonshire (now installed in the neighbouring church at Kingscliffe) which are reliably dated to 1461-75 even though the contract for the construction of the church was signed in 1431.<sup>74</sup> We also know, that there was a gap of six years between the Norwich cellarer's payment of £16 towards the new chancel roof at Wighton in 1449-50 and an outlay of £4 10s<sup>75</sup> for glazing two of the five chancel windows in 1455-56. By contrast, at Martham, which was also appropriated to the cathedral cellarer, payment for glazing the new chancel came in the same year (1468-69) that a plumber was working on the roof. Presumably he was applying the final waterproof leading. And at another church appropriated to the cellarer, Worstead, work began on a new chancel in 1484-85, was continuing in 1485-86 and, by 1487-88, three chancel windows were glazed. The type of patronage involved may also have made a difference to the length of any delay in glazing. Work paid for by individual patrons may well have been less subject to deferral than that financed by corporate bodies, since private sponsors, or their executors, had more of a direct personal interest in getting things done. What is more, a donation would not have been considered sufficient, nor complete, nor a satisfactory record of the donor's piety until the glazing was finished. It is further possible of course, that the glass which survives today was part of a later campaign - an insertion of heraldry might celebrate a later marriage or death, or a new scheme might replace damaged glass.

Several other factors also need to be kept in mind when drawing conclusions on date.

i) So fragmentary are the survivals of medieval glass and so often may they have been removed, re-installed and restored over the years, that even when we do have good documentary evidence of a date, it is extremely rare that it can be attached to specific scheme. For example, a will may specify a payment for glazing a window, but it is very unusual for that window, its location or subject matter to be specifically identified in the bequest. The glass now in the windows of the church concerned may well have come from a different scheme altogether, or may be so mixed up and re-arranged that it can't even be assigned to any particular window, or even, in some cases, that church. It may have been bought and installed by an acquisitive nineteenth-century vicar, for example.

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<sup>73</sup> Marks 1993, 37.

<sup>74</sup> Marks 1993, 195. Salzman gives a date of 1434 for the contract - see p. 44.

<sup>75</sup> NRO DCN 1/2/61B.

ii) The re-use of cartoons either for direct tracing or for reference, may suggest that the same glazier or workshop was involved with work installed in two or more churches. So, if one church can be securely dated and the other can't, it may be a helpful indicator of date, but it isn't conclusive. As we have seen (p. 66) a cartoon or reference drawing might be kept on paper or parchment, renewed as necessary and may have been in use for many years. And, while fashions certainly changed, there seems to have been a certain conservatism among Norfolk stained glass-painters, as David King has pointed out.<sup>76</sup>

iii) In similar vein, some attempts have been made - especially by King - to detect the hand of individual painters who have worked on glass in different churches. However, even two of the most convincing matches in different churches do not, on their own, prove that the glazing dates are necessarily closely aligned. Several leading glaziers of the time had very long working lives. John Wighton started his apprenticeship in 1404 and died 53 years later. Another Norwich glazier, Thomas Glaswryght, who was recorded as repairing windows in the cathedral from 1431 to 1477 as well as installing glass in Martham, enjoyed a working life of at least 46 years.<sup>77</sup>

These uncertainties and caveats need to be taken into account when dating glass and may help explain apparent inconsistencies. But where we have no evidence to suggest otherwise, the most logical policy must be to assume that the date of construction is the one most likely to apply to the installation of the glass. Certainly, one could allow for a delay of perhaps five to ten years after the completion of building work, but such a delay surely can't have been considered desirable and is likely to have been the exception rather than the rule. So, in the light of these provisos, what can be said about the date, or dates, of the glass at Wighton?

By far the most comprehensive work on dating Norfolk glass has been done by David King. In his 2012 paper on John Wighton's workshop, he estimates the dates of glass in some 18 churches which he identifies - nearly always on the basis of style, common motifs and shared cartoons - as emanating from that workshop before Wighton's death in 1457. As has already been pointed out, all attributions to the workshop are open to question, but it is instructive to follow the implications of his approach, both with regard to the workshop and to the date of the glass. King attributes the glass at All Saints to John Wighton, and specifies a date of 1455-56, the year right at the end of glass-maker's life when the cellarer's payment was recorded.<sup>78</sup> This must, by definition have been correct for some of the original glass, but the problem with accepting this date for all the extant glazing is that the cathedral cellarar's rolls refer only to two chancel windows and, as we have seen, all the remaining medieval glass in the church is now in the nave - mostly in the tracery lights. It is a point which King acknowledged in 1996, but which he doesn't caveat when

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<sup>76</sup> See p. 53, above.

<sup>77</sup> King 2006, 139.

<sup>78</sup> King 2012, 360-361.

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he lists the 1455-56 date for Wighton 16 years later.<sup>79</sup> It is, of course, possible that some glass has been moved from the chancel but most of it, as we have seen, clearly belongs to the aisle or clerestory windows. Since construction of this part of the church was finished by 1417,<sup>80</sup> it is most likely that the virgin saints, apostles and musician angels, and possibly all of the remaining glass were made then, some 38 years earlier than King has suggested.

In order to test this revised date further, it is necessary to re-examine the evidence for dating other glazing campaigns which can be linked to those at Wighton. But before doing so, it is worth noting that there is already a potential inconsistency with the spread of dates which David King proposes for glazing that he identifies as being from the Wighton workshop. Although we know Wighton became a free man in 1411, King identifies only two glazing schemes by his workshop which he feels might date from before 1430: Great Cressingham (1420-45) and some of the glass at Salle (1411-40). Only three more - West Rudham (*c.* 1430-40), Blakeney (*c.* 1435-45) and Great Snoring (*c.* 1435-45)<sup>81</sup> - does he identify as examples which might have survived from the 1430s. All the rest - some 13 out of 18 churches - he gives a date post 1440.<sup>82</sup>

This would mean that 70 per cent of the surviving schemes which King has attributed to John Wighton and his glass painters were undertaken during the last third of his working life - a distinctly unbalanced distribution and surely an unlikely one. Logic suggests that, while the output of the workshop may well have grown over time, we would expect to find a rather more substantial corpus of glass from the 1410-30s. Certainly, there were plenty of churches being rebuilt and new windows being installed during this period, so demand for glass must have been strong. Why would we have virtually nothing from the first 30 years after 1411, only for the workshop's surviving production to cluster so heavily into the latter third of Wighton's hugely successful professional life? This seems especially unlikely since, with good evidence, King feels that the workshop was producing one of the most spectacular and high-quality glazing campaigns of the fifteenth century - at St Peter Mancroft - between 1445 and 1460. This was an exceptionally demanding contract, surely reducing the workshop's capacity to take on other jobs.

It is certainly possible to come up with potential reasons which might account for this unbalanced scenario. First, King's attributions to John Wighton may be incomplete or partly mistaken - perhaps there is other work which has been missed, and some wrongly included in the corpus. Perhaps, on the other hand, it is pure chance which has led to earlier glass being lost and later glass surviving. Maybe significant amounts of pre-1440 glass were replaced a couple of decades later. Or did Wighton's workshop develop in such a way that it operated on a very small scale for 30 years, before output suddenly mushroomed in the 1440s and 1450s? Any or all these factors

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<sup>79</sup> King 1996, 219.

<sup>80</sup> See p.31.

<sup>81</sup> King gives two different dates for the glass in the chancel at Great Snoring (King 2012). In a footnote on p. 349 he suggests "*c.* 1425-*c.* 1435" for a motif which he feels is characteristic of the Wighton workshop, but in his main summary table dating glass in the chancel on pp. 360-361 he quotes the date range "*c.* 1435-45".

<sup>82</sup> King 2012, 360-361.

might have contributed to such an uneven distribution of dates. But, assuming King is broadly right in his attributions, a simpler explanation is that the glass in some of these churches was made and installed earlier than he has proposed.

The analysis of the Wighton glass so far in this chapter has confirmed some links which have already been made with other churches - notably the female saints at Cley. But it has also established some new and specific connections with the glass at Great Snoring, Warham, St Peter Hungate and Little Walsingham. And when evidence connected with the fabric and documentation of these churches is considered in this light, some of King's other conclusions also appear in need of refinement. At Great Snoring for example, his suggested dates of 1435-45 didn't appear to take into account the circumstantial evidence which strongly suggests the chancel was built from about 1420. Nor did it seek to explain a will leaving money to a window (presumably in the nave) in 1461. When dating the glass at Cley to *c.* 1450-60, King has raised the question of when the aisle and windows were built, but he felt that the date was uncertain.<sup>83</sup> In fact, as we shall see, there is now very strong evidence to suggest that they were constructed *c.* 1415-20. The remainder of this section is therefore concerned with assessing evidence around the building and glazing dates of these churches.

## Cley

**Glass in question:** Virgin saints and risen Christ

**Proposed date:** 1415-20

**Distance from Wighton:** 8 miles

There are no documentary sources to help directly with dating, but it is clear that the leading edges of the aisle roofs were raised to allow the insertion of the impressive series of four-light Perpendicular windows on both sides of the nave. The great west window and the east window of the chancel probably date from the same period of reconstruction. The other addition in Perpendicular style is the two-storey south porch which was built on the south aisle, and a persuasive case has been made by Helen Lunnon for a date of *c.* 1414-15 for its construction.<sup>84</sup> This is based on the extensive display of heraldry around the entrance arch which Lunnon connects to "the dynastic lineage, social connections and devotional allegiances" of Lady Beatrice Stafford who, through her deceased husband Thomas de Ros (d. 1384), held the advowson of the church here until her death in 1415.<sup>85</sup> My own examination of the fabric at the point where the porch meets the aisle reveals that the aisle roof was raised either before - or most likely at the same time that - the porch was built. So it seems that the windows must have been available for glazing from soon after 1415 - at the same time that the new nave at Wighton was being built and at least 35 years earlier than King's estimate.

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<sup>83</sup> King 2006, cxlviii, footnote 307; and 64.

<sup>84</sup> Lunnon 2012, 152. She also points out a link between the embattled transoms of the east and west windows of the church, with those on the south windows of the porch and argues that the work should be considered contemporary (Lunnon 2012, 113).

<sup>85</sup> Blomefield 1805-1810, vol. 9, 380.

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## St Peter Hungate

**Glass in question:** Figure of St Agatha, scroll-bearing angels, musician angels, and other fragments

**Proposed date:** 1430-50

**Distance from Wighton:** 30 miles

This small, aisle-less, cruciform church is notable for its extraordinarily large windows, which account for about 60 per cent of the nave walls. They were clearly designed to flood the building with light and presumably also to allow an impressive display of stained glass, a good deal of which has survived, though much re-arranged over the centuries. Precise dating of both the glass and the church, which was clearly rebuilt in the fifteenth century, has proven problematic. An assertion, first made by Young and Goreham in 1969, that a new tower and chancel were paid for by parishioner and mercer Thomas Ingham in 1431 has been repeated by several authorities since, although the no trace of the document cited can now be found.<sup>86</sup> However the date is credible and the Ingham family certainly had the means to pay for this. Ingham (d. 1457), was city treasurer (1417-18), sheriff (1420), twice mayor (1425, 1431), and in parliament three times. He was spectacularly wealthy, able for example to loan his son, Thomas junior, 1,000 marks (£666 13s 4d).<sup>87</sup> Thomas junior, who died young in 1451 left 20s to the reparation of St Peter Hungate,<sup>88</sup> his brother Nicholas requested burial in the porch which, also according to Blomefield, he paid to have built.<sup>89</sup> The will of Thomas senior does not survive.

The other prominent and exceptionally wealthy residents in this otherwise somewhat impoverished parish were the Paston family. Blomefield states that the advowson was conveyed to John Paston (d. 1466) in 1458, which is also credible, since Paston's wife Margaret presented a new rector in 1468.<sup>90</sup> Blomefield goes on to say that Paston immediately "demolished the whole old fabrick, which was in decay, and rebuilt the present church".<sup>91</sup> There is certainly good reason to assume that the Pastons were concerned about the control and presentation of their Norwich parish church. Not only did they acquire the advowson but, in 1466, John Paston's corpse lay in the church while en route from London to its burial in Bromeholm Abbey and his fourth son, Walter (1456-79), was buried in the south aisle.<sup>92</sup> And they certainly had the means to finance

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<sup>86</sup> Young and Goreham 1969, 5 and 25, followed by, for example, Pevsner and Wilson 1997, 247. King notes: "Young and Goreham say that the chancel was completed in 1431, citing an entry in the 'Book of Mayors' for that year. This reference cannot be found in the various MSS in NRO known by this title, and one suspects a possible confusion with the entry for 1431 in NRO MS 11285 (Chronological List of Bailiffs and Mayors 1275-1715): 'This year St Peter of Mancroft Church was built.' - <http://www.cvma.ac.uk/publications/digital/norfolk/sites/norwichhungate/history.html> [Accessed: 1/6/2017].

<sup>87</sup> Kleineke and Ross 2016, 5 and 7.

<sup>88</sup> NRO NCC Wight 2.

<sup>89</sup> He also requested burial in Blackfriars church and left 33s 4d to St Andrew's high altar and 40s to the reparation of the same church.

<sup>90</sup> Blomefield 1805-1810, vol. 4, 329-334.

<sup>91</sup> Blomefield 1805-1810, vol. 4, 330.

<sup>92</sup> Blomefield 1805-1810, vol. 4, 333 and vol. 11, 125.

rebuilding and re-glazing - the wealth of the family is well documented.<sup>93</sup> Although his father Sir William Paston (d. 1444) had not been over generous in his will, John Paston was a successful London lawyer in his own right and married well - Margaret was possessed of nine manors in Norfolk and Suffolk. He was assessed with income of £66 in the 1451 Norwich taxation list.<sup>94</sup> But a problem arises with Blomefield's dating of the nave. He states: "it appears by the date in stone on the buttress by the north door, that it was finished in 1460, where there is an old trunk of an oak represented without any leaves, to signify the decayed church and from the root springs a fresh branch with acorns on it, to denote the new one, raised where the old one stood; the words are: *fundata in Anno Domini Mcccclx*".<sup>95</sup> There are two issues with Blomefield's interpretation here. Firstly, the two years between 1458, when he says work began, and 1460, when he claimed it was finished, is too short a time to build a nave of such height and structural sophistication - at least four or five years would almost certainly have been necessary. Secondly, his reading of the inscription is, in any case, questionable. The lettering and the image is now eroded to the point of illegibility, but a nineteenth-century sketch of it was collected by Dawson Turner and it appears from this to have read "t. o. / f. t. a. d. / m cccc / lx".<sup>96</sup> It is unclear to what t. o. refers, and while the end of the inscription does seem to read "A. D. 1460", f. t. is a strange contraction for "fundata" which, in any case, means founded, not finished. It is possible that t. o. and f. t. may even be the initials of two individuals and have no relevance to the construction date.

An analysis of the fabric certainly suggests that, sometime in the fifteenth century, a new tower with a Perpendicular-style west window was built. The remains of an earlier, steeper roof-line, still visible on the east side of the tower, confirms that current nave and transepts must have been constructed after this, almost certainly to abut an existing chancel. This sequence is proven by the fact that the rood stair was built against the wall of the chancel, but is integral with the fabric of the north transept. Meanwhile, the chancel arch matches the design of the interior wall arches of the nave windows, so must surely have been installed as part of the same campaign in which the nave and its short transepts were rebuilt. The chancel itself was re-fenestrated in the fifteenth century with Perpendicular windows.<sup>97</sup> An image of a female donor with the arms of Sir Thomas Erpingham (d. 1428) is recorded in the chancel which suggests a memorial tribute, and supports the 1431 date for its reconstruction cited above.

The nave and transepts then were built last and apparently in one campaign since the traceries are all of the same design, with distinctive and unusual "shouldered" ogees at the heads of the main

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<sup>93</sup> See for example Richmond 1990 and ODNB.

<sup>94</sup> Virgoe 1988.

<sup>95</sup> Blomefield 1805-1810, vol. 4, 330-331.

<sup>96</sup> BL Add. Ms. 23061.

<sup>97</sup> Windows nIII and sIII probably date from the early sixteenth century when the chancel was "rebuilt" after the roof collapsed in 1604. Windows I, nII and nIII and most of the walling seems to have survived the collapse. Pevsner and Wilson 1995, 247 and King - CVMA <http://www.cvma.ac.uk/publications/digital/norfolk/sites/norwichhungate/history.html> [accessed June 1, 2017].

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lights. The only comparable examples of this device in Norfolk all date between 1437 and 1451 and are found in the nave windows at Wiveton (c. 1437),<sup>98</sup> Great Cressingham (before 1440),<sup>99</sup> the east window at Wighton (1440s, see p. 38), the naves at Martham (late 1440s)<sup>100</sup> and Norwich Blackfriars (north aisle, before 1449),<sup>101</sup> the clerestory at St John Maddernmarket, Norwich (after 1420, before 1452)<sup>102</sup> and the north aisle at South Creake (before 1451).<sup>103</sup>

In 1975, Richard Fawcett considered these coincidences and was unconvinced that this design feature was distinctive enough to signal the involvement of a single mason.<sup>104</sup> However, the examples at Wighton, Cressingham, Hungate, Blackfriars and Maddernmarket are strikingly similar and Fawcett did identify the work of the “Wiveton mason” - whom he tentatively identified as James Woderove - at 19 churches including Hungate, Great Cressingham and St John Maddernmarket. The connection between the Wighton chancel and Woderove was not known to Fawcett, but adds crucial documentary confirmation to the identification.<sup>105</sup> Another connection is that the cathedral cellararer - who paid Woderove for the Wighton chancel - also held the advowson and one of the manors at Martham, and at Great Cressingham, where the rebuilding was paid for by John Paston’s father, Sir William (d. 1444).<sup>106</sup> A final link between Woderove and Hungate has recently been suggested by Helen Lunnon who identified formal similarities in facial shape and eyes, in the treatment of fabric, and in angels’ wings in the sculpture at Hungate, St George Colegate (Woderove’s parish church) and on the Erpingham Gate (probably built by Woderove c. 1430).<sup>107</sup>

Thus all the evidence of the masonry work suggests that James Woderove worked on the Hungate nave and that the window traceries surely pre-date his death in 1451. It may be objected that it is possible for workshops to continue to use templates after the death of the designer, so matching profiles and designs do not strictly limit building dates to the lifetime of that mason.<sup>108</sup> But the earlier chronology suggested is further supported by a bequest, also

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<sup>98</sup> Cattermole and Cotton 1983, 274.

<sup>99</sup> A series of bequests shows that the tower and nave were rebuilt from 1415-51, with a bequest for the porch confirming that the aisles must have been up by 1439 (Cattermole and Cotton 1983, 244).

<sup>100</sup> Cattermole and Cotton 1983, 255.

<sup>101</sup> Sutermeister 1977, 22.

<sup>102</sup> Cattermole and Cotton 1983, 258: 1452 bequest of “£2 to new leading and roofing”.

<sup>103</sup> Cattermole and Cotton 1983, 244: 1451 bequest to glaze a window on north side of the church.

<sup>104</sup> Fawcett 1975 and 1982.

<sup>105</sup> Trend 2015.

<sup>106</sup> In the windows at the east end of the north aisle, Blomefield records “a shield of Paston, and below is this inscription: ‘Orate pro animabus Dni Willielmi Paston’. This Sir William was lord of Street Hall [a manor in Cressingham], and built this aisle.” Sir William, it is worth noting, had business dealings with the Gigges family in Wighton before 1428, having held land at Helhoughton with John Gigges (c. 1398-after 1466), Sir Thomas Erpingham (c. 1355-1428) and John Townshend (c. 1390s-1466) adjacent to the Townshend estate at Raynham, about 18 miles north of Great Cressingham. Confirmation dated August 5 1449 and Quitclaim dated August 10 1449, RHA Box RL 11/B. See also Appendix Two.

<sup>107</sup> Lunnon 2017.

<sup>108</sup> Trend 2015, 364-365.

in 1451, which left four marks towards making a bell or painting the rood loft. This strongly implies that the rood stair (built at the same time as the north transept, see above) and chancel arch were completed and the church sealed before that date.<sup>109</sup> The testator was a mason; perhaps he had worked on the nave himself.

In summary, the nave at St Peter must have been built not in 1460, but at the latest in the 1440s, with the Pastons - either Sir William (d. 1444) or John and Margaret - or the Ingham family, or both, the most likely sponsors. Such a chronology also makes more sense of the glazing, which will be considered next.

David King divides the glass at Hungate into two periods - fifteenth and sixteenth century - and dates virtually all the fifteenth-century glass to c. 1460-65,<sup>110</sup> which is underpinned by Blomefield's date of 1460 for the nave. However, this does not sit well with the style or design of some of the surviving fragments, especially those which have connections to glass in other churches. For example and as we have seen, the St Agatha now in the east window of the chancel, shares the same design as the depictions of the same saint in the naves at Cley and Wighton, both of which were being built from about 1415-20. Meanwhile, one of the musician angels now in the north tower window at Hungate (2d) [plate 96] is clearly related to an angel at Great Snoring and others at Cawston, Weston Longville, Cockthorpe and possibly Warham (1420s) - see plates [93-98]. Unfortunately there is no useful evidence for dating Cawston, Weston Longville, or Cockthorpe churches, though the tower at Cawston was under repair in 1421, having collapsed in 1412, and the nave must have been rebuilt after this. Indeed, David King has stated that "the stonework and remaining *in situ* fragments of glass of the matching north and south aisles suggest a date of c. 1420 - c. 1430".<sup>111</sup>

Finally, among the remaining fifteenth-century glass at Hungate are seven scroll-bearing angels, which are extremely closely related to one at Great Snoring and also to examples at Wighton and Warham (all from 1417 to the 1420s) [plates 36-39] and must surely come from the same artist or workshop (see pp. 73-74).<sup>112</sup> The Hungate angels are currently in the east chancel window and in the north nave transept, but King argues that they all were originally made for the north and south transept windows. However, there is a problem with locating the angels in these windows because several of them have notches cut in their wings which were clearly made to allow them to fit around the stone cusp in the head of the window light. It hasn't been possible to measure precisely, but while the notches seem to be of the correct dimensions to fit into the heads of the east chancel

<sup>109</sup> NRO NCC Aleyn 77.

<sup>110</sup> King 2012, 361. His panel by panel survey is at CVMA <http://www.cvma.ac.uk/publications/digital/norfolk/sites/norwich-hungate/catalogue.html> [Accessed: January 22, 2017].

<sup>111</sup> CVMA <http://www.cvma.ac.uk/publications/digital/norfolk/sites/cawston/history.html> [Accessed: August 26, 2017]. King does not, however, make an attribution to the John Wighton workshop.

<sup>112</sup> It is possible that the Wighton angels may be part of the later chancel scheme of 1455-56 - see p. 85 - but a date in 1417, just before those at Warham and Great Snoring, makes more sense. It should be remembered too that, even if the Wighton angels did come from the chancel, we do not have to date them quite as late as 1455-56, since the cellarer's roll of this date accounts only for the glazing of two of the five chancel windows. The others might have been glazed in 1450-51, the year after the chancel was roofed. And since John Wighton himself was active from before 1411 until his death in 1456, it is still conceivable that he might himself have painted all these examples during his lifetime.



window, they were apparently not made for the heads of the main lights of the transept windows (see left) - even taking into account mistakes in restoration. So it is also possible that the scroll-bearing angels were originally made for the chancel in the early 1430s. An earlier date such as this would fit comfortably with the Great Snoring glass and the scroll-bearing angels in the Wighton nave of *c.* 1417-1430.

In summary, the connection with James Woderove links Hungate to the churches at Wiveton, Great Cressingham, Wighton, Martham, Norwich Blackfriars and St John Maddernmarket for which there is convincing documentary evidence dating them to before Woderove's death in 1451. There are also close similarities between the some of the glass at Hungate and that at Wighton, Warham and Great Snoring which all date before 1440. Finally, the will referring to the chancel screen strongly suggests that the Hungate nave was built, and the glass installed at least ten years before 1460.

## **Little Walsingham**

**Glass in question:** Musician angels and angels with naked torsos

**Proposed date:** 1425-1430

**Distance from Wighton:** 3 miles

Matching masons' marks recorded by G. G. Coulton and R. H. C. Davis, before fire destroyed much of the church, indicate that at least two of the masons who worked on Wighton nave also worked at Little Walsingham, while two others had worked at St Nicholas, Lynn. Davies (who wasn't aware of the Wighton marks) suggested a building date for Little Walsingham of 1425, which still seems a good estimate for at least part of the work (see Appendix One). The overall building campaign was a long one: there was also a bequest to the porch in 1458, and work on the chapels and "eles" (either "aisles" or "chapel") continued until 1535. But the marks provide strong evidence of a start date in the 1420s.<sup>113</sup> Unfortunately, the locations of the marks were not specified by either historian, so they can't be linked to specific windows or arcades, although the two chancel windows certainly appear to be from the earliest part of the campaign.

## **Warham St Mary Magdalene**

**Distance from Wighton:** 2 miles

**Proposed date:** *c.* 1424

**Glass in question:** musician angels, angel heads and other fragments

Warham, which comprised three manors and three parishes,<sup>114</sup> borders Wighton to the north. In 1424, the rector, John Goodwyne,<sup>115</sup> bequeathed 6s 8d to make a window in the early-medieval

<sup>113</sup> Cattermole and Cotton 1983, 272.

<sup>114</sup> All Saints, St Mary the Virgin (no longer extant) and St Mary Magdalene.

<sup>115</sup> Blomefield 1805-1810, vol. 9, 266.

tower of St Mary Magdalene<sup>116</sup> - presumably this referred to the west window which still exists, though it has been re-glazed since. It is a modest amount which would not have been sufficient to have covered either the stonework or the glazing, and is more likely to have been a contribution to a more general re-fenestration of this relatively small, aisle-less church in which six of the windows are of Perpendicular design, the others earlier. The nave was also probably extended southwards at the same time and the crenellations were likely to have been added to the tower at some point during the fifteenth century.<sup>117</sup> Thus the new windows were probably installed slightly later than the Wighton nave - in around 1424 when Goodwyne died. The status of the glass in the church today is slightly problematic, however. We can discount the sixteenth-century German glass from Seinfeld monastery near Cologne, glass which was almost certainly bought and installed by the early nineteenth-century rector John Christopher Hampp. However, the north window of the nave contains a collection of fifteenth-century Norwich-style glass, comprising mostly the heads of angels, saints and the Virgin, plus some fragments of fictive architecture, several of which are similar to those in Wighton and Great Snoring. Woodforde suggested that this glass was also collected from other churches, however there seems to be no evidence for this and the similarities in style of many of the heads strongly suggests that they were produced by the same artists and workshop at about the same time, and are therefore much more likely to have come from one church, most probably this one. Several fragments show detailed similarities with glass at both Wighton and Great Snoring - at least one cartoon was also re-used - so it seems as though one artist worked on glass in all three churches (see p. 91).

## Great Snoring

**Glass in question:** Musician and scroll-bearing angels

**Proposed date:** 1425-30

**Distance from Wighton:** 5 miles

St Mary's was re-modelled in the fifteenth century. The tower was rebuilt; the walls of the chancel and nave were raised and the roof pitches were made much shallower; a low clerestory was constructed above the old south arcade (or an earlier one was adapted); and nearly all the windows - including those on the both sides of the chancel - were replaced with Perpendicular versions.<sup>118</sup> It is most likely that the re-modelling of the chancel and the north side of the nave was sponsored, perhaps *post mortem*, either by Sir Ralph Shelton II (1348-1414)<sup>119</sup> who held the manor and the advowson of the church, or his wife Alice, whose family name was Uvedale. His body lies with Alice's in a tomb in the founder's position next to the altar on the north side of the chancel. Much of the original tomb brass has been lost, but John Sell Cotman sketched it in

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<sup>116</sup> Cattermole and Cotton 1983, 272.

<sup>117</sup> The crenellations may have been added later in the fifteenth century - as was the case at Wighton.

<sup>118</sup> Pevsner points out that the fabric shows evidence of at least four medieval building campaigns culminating in an extensive reconstruction in the fifteenth century. Pevsner 1997, 483.

<sup>119</sup> There were several Sir Ralphs - I use Sir Ralph II to distinguish him from his father, Sir Ralph Shelton I (1305-1375) and great grandson, Sir Ralph III (1430-97).

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1815, recording four heraldic shields:

**Above Sir Ralph:** Shelton impaling Burgulion

**Below Sir Ralph:** Burgulion impaling Shelton

**Above Alice:** Shelton impaling Uvedale

**Below Alice:** Burgulion impaling de Plais<sup>120</sup>

He also recorded the following inscription *in situ* in his illustration thus:

[lost] *Radulphus Shelton miles qui obiit xxv° die mensis Octobris Anno domini* [lost] *filia Thome de Uvedale*  
militis de [lost] *obiit xiii° die mensis May Anno domini* [lost].

Cotman's accompanying text fills in a death year of 1424 for Sir Ralph II, though leaves the date incomplete for Alice, who was the daughter of Sir Thomas Uvedale. In fact Sir Ralph II died not on May 13 1424, but on October 25, 1414 and both Cotman and Blomefield, who also cites 1424 as his death date, must be relying on an inaccurate earlier source, or one that records an original mistake on the brass itself.<sup>121</sup> A neat explanation would be that 1424 was actually the year that Alice died and either the engraver or a later recorder got confused.

There is also a Shelton shield on the north-west buttress of the nave, and Blomefield states: "In many windows about the church were the arms of Sir Ralph Shelton, impaling Uvedale, who were probably the builders of, or benefactors to, the present church, in the reign of Henry VI." They are certainly the most likely candidates for the commissioning of the new building work and the glazing which went with it. Blomefield also adds that the "effigies of Sir Thomas Erpingham in armour, with his arms, and crest, a plume of ostrich's feathers, argent, issuing out of a coronet, *gules*, with his motto" were to be found in one of the windows, "and in the steeple window, those of Elmham, Calthorp, Uvedale, &c."<sup>122</sup> Sir Thomas, along with unnamed others, is listed by Blomefield as presenting the rector, John Tolle, in 1413. Sir Thomas died in 1428 (see also St Peter Hungate, p. 88).

Unpicking the family relationships is complicated and it is easiest to start with Sir Ralph Shelton I (1305-1375), who fought at Cressy and Poitiers and was buried at the family seat of Shelton, south Norfolk. Blomefield thought he married Joan de Plais (d. 1405) in 1346,<sup>123</sup> but the History of Parliament suggests that his first wife may have been Joan Burgulion.<sup>124</sup> The Burgulions were his cousins and he inherited the Great Snoring lordship from Joan de Burgolyon before 1353. He perhaps married both, which might explain the different arms on his son's tomb at Snoring (though normally a husband with two wives would represent both wives' arms split *per fess*, with the first

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<sup>120</sup> Cotman 1819, 29. The heraldry is identified in Farrer 1889, 352.

<sup>121</sup> The correct date is confirmed by Inquisitions Post Mortem (C138/6/2) as cited in HOP 1993. Blomefield gives a somewhat garbled version of the inscription mistakenly giving Sir Ralph's death date as 25 April, 1424 (Blomefield 1805-1810, vol. 9, 257).

<sup>122</sup> Blomefield 1805-1810, vol. 9, 257.

<sup>123</sup> Blomefield 1805-1810, vol. 5, 265-266 and 9, 255.

<sup>124</sup> HOP 1993.

wife's paternal arms in chief and the second *in base*. So the impalements may represent other family marriages). Sir Ralph II (1348-1414) was his heir and seems to have based himself at Snoring.

A key point of confusion now arises. After Sir Ralph II's death in 1414, a William Shelton took possession of Great Snoring manor.<sup>125</sup> This was either (according to Blomefield) Sir Ralph II's brother or (according to an Inquisition Post Mortem of 1431, which is surely the more reliable source) his son. That William's wife Catherine did not die until 1456 makes it most likely that William was indeed his son.<sup>126</sup> However, although William would have been his natural heir, Sir Ralph II tried to skip a generation and bequeath Great Snoring and other manors to his grandson John, who was William's son and who was born in 1406 and so still a minor in 1414.<sup>127</sup> However, after Sir Ralph II's death in 1414, William nevertheless seized possession of all the estates and Sir Ralph II's "attempts to control their descent resulted in protracted litigation".<sup>128</sup> John Shelton was finally enfeoffed with the family manors after the deaths of both William (1421, buried in Shelton) and Sir Thomas Erpingham (1428) who had been enfeoffed with the manors as part of Sir Ralph II's arrangements for the inheritance. John died young in 1430 when his own son, another Ralph III (1430-97), was only three months old.<sup>129</sup> This left William's widow Catherine (d. 1456), who presented a new rector in 1432, and John's widow Margaret (d. 1479) fighting over the inheritance, presumably for the next 20 years.<sup>130</sup> Sir Ralph III presented a rector to Great Snoring in 1459 when aged 29, so presumably things were settled by then.<sup>131</sup> He lived at Shelton, rebuilt Shelton church and was buried there.<sup>132</sup> So unless he also decided to rebuild Great Snoring while incorporating the arms of his great grandparents Sir Ralph II and Alice in the windows - which seems unlikely - the one point of stability in our time-frame is 1421-24. This is the time when, assuming she did die in 1424, Alice out-lived her son William. It is the most likely point when such substantial building work might have been started and funded. The now anonymous tomb slab with a white marble surround of the same design as Sir Ralph and Alice's 1414-24 tomb, but on the south side of the altar may perhaps mark John's grave.

As for the glass, one of the chancel windows is bricked up, but a substantial amount of medieval glass survives in two others, which have the same tracery design as the north nave windows. Four musician angels are set in the tracery lights of sIII and four in nII. Each "set" of four angels is slightly different in style and although restored, enough original glass survives - especially in sIII 1a and 1d and nII 1b and 1c - for us to be sure that they come originally from these lights, from sII,

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<sup>125</sup> MMC 2014, <http://www.inquisitionspostmortem.ac.uk/view/inquisition/21-806> [Accessed April 16, 2017].

<sup>126</sup> MMC 2014, <http://www.inquisitionspostmortem.ac.uk/view/inquisition/23-515/517> [Accessed April 16, 2017].

<sup>127</sup> MMC 2014, <http://www.inquisitionspostmortem.ac.uk/view/inquisition/23-138> [Accessed April 16, 2017].

<sup>128</sup> HOP 1993.

<sup>129</sup> Richardson and Everingham 2011, 391.

<sup>130</sup> Richmond 2000, 218.

<sup>131</sup> Blomefield 1805-1810, vol. 9, 256.

<sup>132</sup> The rebuilding was unfinished at his death, but his will requires his executors to complete the work "according to the form as I have begunne it" (Armstrong 1895, 235).

**Table 7: Summary of revised dates for the medieval stained glass in six Norfolk churches**

	<b>Cley</b>	<b>Wighton</b>	<b>Great Snoring</b>	<b>Little Walsingham</b>	<b>Warham</b>	<b>Norwich St Peter Hungate</b>
Date estimated by David King	c 1450-60	1455-56	c 1435-45	-	-	c. 1460-1465
Evidence cited or implied	Style	Cellarer's rolls	Style	-	-	Supposed date of transepts
New date proposed	1415-1420	c. 1417	1425-30	1425-30	c. 1424	1430-50
Evidence cited for new date	Building date	Building date and cellarer's rolls	Building date	Masons' marks	Will and building date	Complex: see pp. 88-92
Same reference used for virgin saints and/or apostles	x	x				x
Close similarities in figure and drapery design	x	x				
Same cartoon or reference for scroll-bearing angels		x	x		x	x
Similar facial characteristics	x	x	x		x	
Common details in fictive architecture	x	x			x	x
Same cartoon or reference for musician angels		x	x	x		
Same cartoon or reference for naked angels		x		x		
Angels on wheels		x	x			x

or one of the north nave windows. Nichols and Woodforde considered these angels to be part of a series depicting the nine orders. This seems likely since there are examples of at least four orders among the survivors, including the angel in sIII 1d holding a scroll which reads *D[omi]nac[i]ones* (the dominations were one of the orders), and sIII 1c which is dressed in armour and holds a demon on a chain.<sup>133</sup> A fragment of text - *cerub[u/i]m* - also survives in the central main light of nII and the foot of an angel standing on wheels has been set in the margin of sIII 2b (see p. 77). There are also three busts of angels holding scrolls which have been reset in the central lights of the two windows - an original word on one scroll - *Sanctus* (from the *Te Deum*) - survives. Stylistic links with glass at Wighton, Warham and St Peter Hungate are strong and the same references have been reused for some faces and torsos - see St Peter Hungate (p. 91) and plates [36-39, 68-71 and 93, 96 and 98].

In summary, both the documentary and antiquarian evidence, and that of the fabric, supports Blomefield's suggestion that the re-modelling was paid for by Sir Ralph and Alice Shelton - with a rebuilding date in the early 1420s most likely. This would suggest that glazing was installed around 1425-30. It is also likely that the fifteenth-century rebuilding was done in two stages, with the rather small, flat-topped windows of the south aisle inserted during the 1450-60s, probably paid for by parishioners. This would explain a legacy paying for a new window in 1461.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>133</sup> Nichols 2002, 33; and Woodforde 1950, 131 - "the special function of Powers was to subdue the forces of evil".

<sup>134</sup> Cattermole and Cotton 1983, 264-265.

## Summary

David King's identification of John Wighton as the man most likely to have produced the stained glass at Wighton, Cley, Great Snoring and Hungate is a reasonable supposition, given his connections with Wighton and north Norfolk and the fact that we know he was commissioned to make the glass for the Wighton chancel in 1455-56. King has not published an opinion on the glazing at Warham and that which was formerly at Little Walsingham, but the similarities with the glass at Wighton suggest there is a compelling case to add them to the corpus which he has attributed to the workshop. Dating is another matter. The new evidence articulated in this thesis suggest that his suggested dates for the glazing of three key north Norfolk churches - Wighton (1455-56), Cley (c. 1450s) and Great Snoring (c. 1435-45) - are in need of revision. It can now be shown that all three churches were built between 1415 and the end of the 1420s, and there is no reason to believe that they were glazed any later than this. Warham and Little Walsingham also fall into this time-frame and there is also now good evidence to suppose that St Peter Hungate nave was built in the 1430s or 1440s, with the tower and chancel dating from the early 1430s. These revisions, and the reasons for them, are summarised in Table 7 (opposite).

Such a revision is not at odds with the known dates of operation of John Wighton's glass-making career. In fact it makes more sense, creating a more even spread of dates to that which has been attributed to his workshop. Nor is the earlier dating at odds with the stylistic evidence that David King marshals. In fact, both he and Richard Marks have acknowledged that the style of the Cley female saints seems significantly earlier than King's proposed dates. In 1974, King suggested that they looked "at first sight" as though they were made in the 1430s, "but the historical and architectural evidence points to the 1460s".<sup>135</sup> No such evidence was cited, however, and, by 2006, he had revised the dates to the 1450s.<sup>136</sup> Marks meanwhile, felt that if dates in the 1450s and 1460s were correct, then the style was distinctly "*retardataire*".<sup>137</sup>

In conclusion, we know that the windows tracery which contained most of the glass at Wighton, Cley, Great Snoring, Little Walsingham and Warham was almost certainly installed during the late 1410s and the 1420s. We know too that the glazier most likely to have produced the glass - a man highly successful in his trade - had by then been in business for a decade. We know that there is nothing in the style, design or thematic concerns of this glass which requires it to have been made any later than a year or two after the stonework was installed. Clearly, what we are looking at in these churches - and at St Peter Hungate - are indeed examples of work from the same Norwich workshop and probably that operated by John Wighton. But this is not glass painted at the end of the glass-maker's life, rather it is from the early and middle parts of his career.

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<sup>135</sup> King 2004, 9.

<sup>136</sup> King 2006, 64 and King 2012, 360. No reason for the revision has been given.

<sup>137</sup> Marks 1993, 198.

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## Conclusions

Close analysis of the reset glass and rediscovered fragments at Wighton, together with comparisons drawn from similar schemes in nearby churches and in Norwich, plus documentary and antiquarian sources enables us to sketch a relatively detailed outline of some key elements of the fifteenth-century glazing scheme at All Saints:

### Main nave windows

The glass originally installed in the nave comprised the following elements and undoubtedly other schemes and elements now lost.

- i) A total of five examples of three different types of large canopies suggest that at least three of the nave windows had figurative glazing in the main lights. It is highly likely that one of these was similar in design to the south chancel window at Little Walsingham with three pairs of angels (on wheels) surmounted by canopies.
- ii) The tracery lights in at least four aisle windows were peopled with apostles and female saints. Some stood under architectural canopies, others against a cloth of honour.
- iii) At least some, if not all of the main lights had a decorative border - with yellow rod and white leaf design around one or some, and trapezoid motifs around others. The slip lights and trefoils were glazed with coloured foliate designs, and the central rosettes at the apex of several windows in the church may have been decorated with roses - probably similar to the red one now in nX.

### The clerestory

A series of musician angels filled the tracery panels of at least two and very probably many more windows - with cherubim and seraphim playing lutes, viols or rebecs and most likely other instruments too.

### The chancel

- i) It is possible that the angels bearing scrolls with the *Salus* responsory were made for the chancel by John Wighton in 1455-56, a commission paid for by the cellarer John Lynn, whose figure may have featured in this or another light as a donor. However, an earlier date contemporary with the other nave glazing, is more likely for this glass.
- ii) The arms of St Edmund were certainly in one of the north windows; while the other heraldry recorded by Blomefield may have been in the south window of the chancel, or in the nave.

As well as re-establishing some of the original content of the Wighton windows, it has been possible, through close examination of the traceries and window reveals, to confirm the likely pattern of patronage of the fifteenth-century re-building project. For the parishioners of Wighton, the design and details of the new-style windows, the most prominent features of the building, were central among their priorities. The evidence clearly suggests that they were specified and paid for by a variety of sponsors - parishioners who were concerned to create a

distinctive and individual frame for the glass which it is also likely that they paid to have painted and installed. When it came to commissioning that glass, those patrons were either influenced by, or themselves influenced the glazing schemes in at least four neighbouring churches: the same workshop or artists which were at work in Wighton were also retained at Cley, Great Snoring, Warham, and Little Walsingham. All these churches were within eight miles of each other, all were being rebuilt between about 1415 and 1430, and their new glazing schemes used the same cartoons or references and reflected similar themes. Surely it was John Wighton, now establishing himself as an up-and-coming glass-maker in Norwich, yet who still maintained connections with his home village, who won the contracts for this work. He was certainly to glaze the Wighton chancel 30 years later at the end of his career and no doubt it was he who installed the glass at St Peter Hungate in the 1430s or 40s. Perhaps it was in glazing these impressive and ambitious new north Norfolk churches that he first made his name.



## *Chapter Three*

### *Economy and society, 1400-1500*

The evidence amassed in Chapters One and Two establishes with confidence that Wighton church was rebuilt in three main phases between about 1412 and 1500, and that it was paid for by multiple sponsors. The purpose of this chapter is to survey the general economic conditions prevailing during this period, the nature of the society and the social changes which were in progress as a context for the church's reconstruction. There is particular emphasis on 1400-12 when the decision to rebuild the nave must have been taken, but the 1440s, when the chancel was built, and the last 20 years of the century when the porch and tower were being embellished, are also of interest. The chapter will then focus specifically upon Wighton itself to try to identify the likely sources of wealth necessary to fund such an ambitious and expensive project.

The long fifteenth century saw a deep structural social and economic shift in both the English economy and its society. It was a shift which encompassed a key phase in the transition from feudalism to capitalism and which was played out against an extended economic cycle which historians still struggle to characterise, let alone explain. While the bigger picture is relatively clear, the more detailed timing of these changes, their causes and the processes by which they happened has been much harder to decode. A vast amount of documentary evidence survives - for example on prices and wages - but it is often inconsistent, opaque and problematic to interpret and to apply. The challenge is made all the more complex since, as Hatcher and Bailey have pointed out, so many influences are at play: "economic activity may be deeply affected by war, by the law, by weather, and by the incidence of disease, as well as by the relative scarcity of land and labour, or the size of the money supply".<sup>1</sup> These complexities are further impacted by regional variables, or apply more to towns than villages, or more to inland communities than those on the coast. The result has been a historiography short on detailed analysis and long on

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<sup>1</sup> Hatcher and Bailey 2001, 16.

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ambitious theorising, “over-arching generalisations” and “abundant confrontations” between academics.<sup>2</sup>

But, for all the pitfalls, contradictions and uncertainties involved in summarising such a broad and controversial sweep of economic and social change, it is possible to tease out key trends relevant to the community in Wighton. The long-term consequences of the Black Death are of central importance here and this at least is one area where there is now a broad historical consensus - both on the scale of the mortality and the long-term socio-economic impact. It is generally accepted that the initial shock in 1349 killed at least 40 per cent and probably more like half of the national population and that population levels then stalled or fell even further over the 150 years between 1377 (2.2-3 million) and the 1520s (*c.* 2.2 million) - the two points where the best evidence for making meaningful calculations survive.<sup>3</sup> It is also widely agreed that it was the high level of mortality caused by the virulence and deadly nature of the repeated plague epidemics of the later fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries that was the key factor behind this extraordinary demographic stagnation.<sup>4</sup> Serious nationwide epidemics in 1361-62 and 1369 were followed by local, regional or further national outbreaks in virtually every decade until the 1480s - see Fig. H (right).<sup>5</sup> This was the grim reality which stalked English and Norfolk society during the period when the reconstruction of so many churches was undertaken. Whatever their economic fortunes, the ever-present fear of a swift, painful and gruesome demise - and the consequent need to prepare for a good death - must have been hard for most people living through the fifteenth century to put out of their minds.

As well as the long-lasting psychological aftershocks and the practical problems caused by high mortality and a stagnating population, the failure of the population to recover caused the economy to shrink overall. The area of arable land under cultivation in *c.* 1400 was 38 per cent lower than it had been before the Black Death, while GDP was 47 per cent lower.<sup>6</sup> Profits in agriculture were stifled by a rise in costs relative to prices and the value of arable land fell dramatically. Yet demand did not collapse and certain industrial sectors - notably woollen textile manufacturing, trade and transport - flourished, the proportion of people living in towns remained constant and GDP *per head* rose by perhaps 45 per cent between *c.* 1300 and *c.* 1400.<sup>7</sup>

For all these general trends, shorter economic cycles are also identifiable within the long fifteenth century. For example, after the initial inflationary boom in the wake of the Black Death, prolonged and severe deflation afflicted the economy from the late 1370s to the 1420s and it was to strike again in the 1440s-60s. A critical cause of both these deflationary episodes was the

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<sup>2</sup> Hatcher 1996, 238.

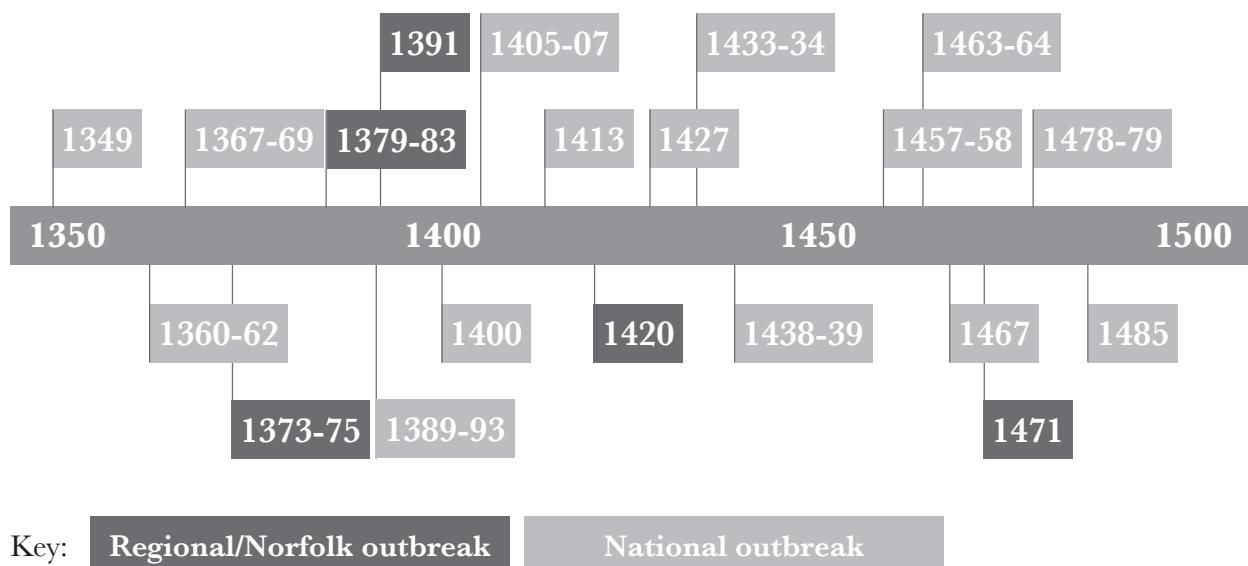
<sup>3</sup> Smith 2012, 45.

<sup>4</sup> Some historians are not fully convinced of this. The most recent summary of the historical debate is in Bolton 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Sources: Creighton 1891, esp 215-233; Bean 1963, 428-431; Hatcher 1977; Gottfried 1978; Smith 2012; Bolton 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Broadberry, Campbell, Klein, Overton, and van Leeuwen 2015, 125 and 205.

<sup>7</sup> Broadberry, Campbell, Klein, Overton, and van Leeuwen 2015, 118 and 205.

**Fig. H: Timeline of plague outbreaks in Norfolk and nationwide, 1349-1500**

so-called “bullion famine” - a chronic European-wide shortage of silver and gold currency which created an acute threat to a transactional system which was based on the use of coin to make payments and store wealth. In theory, a lack of coin would have made it difficult to trade, to pay manorial dues and to raise credit, thus suppressing both prices and economic activity generally. There is no doubt about the hard reality of the shortage, but on a local level, as Dyer has argued, the impact was probably mitigated by the fact that peasants had less and less need for coin in the later Middle Ages.<sup>8</sup> And Bolton has recently proposed that the growing use and acceptance of bonds, which acknowledged a debt and promised to repay the creditor, might be considered a form of paper money which may have alleviated the practical problems of a lack of liquidity, especially in the later phases of the famine.<sup>9</sup>

The challenge therefore is to assess how this complex interaction of long term trends and shorter economic cycles impacted upon the structure of local societies and the economic well-being of the various groups within them. Historians are agreed that the wealthiest institutional landlords suffered falling revenues, as rents and agricultural profits declined. Opportunities for the gentry however probably increased, as long as they could acquire more manors, expand into pastoral farming or obtain roles within the expanding framework of central government in the localities - we shall see later how John de Wighton seems to have done just this when he was appointed collector of customs in Lynn immediately after the accession of Henry IV (p. 161). Meanwhile, as land was now cheaply and widely available, village society tended to become increasingly polarised. A small elite of yeomen and husbandmen, who were in a position to take advantage

<sup>8</sup> Dyer 1997 and Dyer 2005.

<sup>9</sup> Bolton 2011.

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of the situation and acquire more land, constructed sizeable holdings of 30 acres or more and sought to lease components of local manors from landlords withdrawing from direct farming. Smallholding labourers and servants meanwhile, remained dependent mainly upon wage-labour. Wages both for these unskilled and for skilled labourers did rise in the years immediately after the Black Death, despite concerted attempts by landlords and the authorities to prevent it.<sup>10</sup> However, the extent to which standards of living improved is arguable and it wasn't until the years between c. 1380 to c. 1420 that a sustained improvement in real wages, and with it a general improvement in living standards among the rural and urban poor, can be measured. Their fortunes thereafter depend upon an assessment of the extent of their earnings more than the direction of real wages. Earnings are very difficult to recover, but optimists have assumed that a benign confluence of high real wages and earnings resulted in a golden age for English labourers and servants.<sup>11</sup> However, John Hatcher has warned that for much of the rest of the fifteenth century economic activity slowed, depressing opportunities for work among the lower orders, so their living standards stagnated. Furthermore, he argued that labourers represented only a small sector of the economy, that their effect on costs and incomes has been exaggerated and that the “fortunes of the unskilled” do not in any case provide an accurate summary of the state of the broader economy.<sup>12</sup>

While labourers and servants saw a brief moment of prosperity c. 1370-1420, this was also the key period when the more entrepreneurial peasant farmers were making the most of their new economic opportunities and generally enjoying higher standards of living.<sup>13</sup> They were helped by good weather. Between 1376 and the mid 1390s a series of distinctly warmer summers ensured an “unprecedented and unparalleled run” of excellent harvests, especially of oats, barley and wheat.<sup>14</sup> Again, different strata of society were affected in different ways. Large-scale landowners had to adapt radically. As Campbell puts it, “these high yields, at a time of dwindling and weakening demand, created a crisis of over-production for large-scale arable producers” and for them it was essentially a period of “difficulty and recession”.<sup>15</sup> Those subsisting on small parcels of land, however could eat well and sell any surplus,<sup>16</sup> but manor officials managing their demesnes had to respond to a collapse in returns “by diversifying into livestock, scaling down their arable enterprise, or farming out their lands piecemeal or wholesale to tenants”.<sup>17</sup>

This new emphasis on livestock farming, principally of cattle and sheep, was predicated on two key economic trends. First, from about 1370 until about 1415, prices for meat and wool, though

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<sup>10</sup> Hatcher 1994.

<sup>11</sup> Bolton 2012, 262-267.

<sup>12</sup> Hatcher 2011.

<sup>13</sup> Bolton 2012, 272.

<sup>14</sup> Campbell 2012, 121-174, esp. 144.

<sup>15</sup> Campbell 2012, 161.

<sup>16</sup> Dyer 1988.

<sup>17</sup> Campbell 2012, 161.

not strong, were relatively better than for grain. Second, at a time when manpower was in short supply, that pastoral farming required less intensive labour than arable.<sup>18</sup> A shortage of labourers was compounded by the fact that those workers which landlords and manorial officials were able to recruit to till and harvest arable crops were, as Whittle points out, more expensive and - especially since the uprisings of 1381 - "increasingly indolent and truculent" in their reluctance to fulfill their customary duties.<sup>19</sup> So, with labour costs high and land more plentifully and more cheaply available, such a shift towards livestock farming made obvious economic sense. And not only did the landlords of large estates expand their own flocks and herds, but so did enterprising peasants willing to take on new leases.

Aggressive expansion by this new breed of entrepreneurial sheep farmer was, towards the end of the century, to have profound effects on the agrarian landscape of north Norfolk in particular. But the impetus for these changes came earlier and was provided by the sustained and dramatic increase in the ratio of livestock prices to arable prices between the 1370s and the 1440s which, combined with the relatively low requirement for labour just discussed, greatly increased the attractiveness of dairy, stock and sheep farming.<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile, problems in grain production were exacerbated in the 1420s by a series of poor summers and poor yields. This was followed by a mixed era of very good and very bad harvests in the 1430s and 1440s, then a particularly bad run of failures in 1437, 1438, 1441 and 1442.<sup>21</sup> These heralded what has become known as the "great slump", a period which John Hatcher describes as one "when an extraordinary range of powerful depressive forces combined to impose an enduring and wide-ranging slump of precipitous proportions upon the long-term recessionary trend." His analysis is extremely bleak: "with scarcely an exception, all available indices of production and exchange weakened, with the result that in almost all sectors of the economy substantially less was being produced, bought and sold than previously, with predictably adverse consequences for profits, employment and incomes".<sup>22</sup> It was probably more severe in some parts of the country than others. The north and the north-east for example, were very badly affected.<sup>23</sup> But combined as it was with another more pronounced phase in the bullion shortage, and a significant outbreak of plague, the 1440s and 1450s marked the economic low point of a troubled century.

There is less historical consensus around the period from about 1460 until the 1520s. The worst of the great slump was over, but the harvests of the last decades of the century were, broadly speaking, "dismal" and there is little evidence of overall economic growth on a national

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<sup>18</sup> Munro 2012, 305-307.

<sup>19</sup> Whittle 2013, 13.

<sup>20</sup> Broadberry, Campbell, Klein, Overton, and van Leeuwen 2015, 61.

<sup>21</sup> Campbell 2012, esp 144.

<sup>22</sup> Hatcher 1996, 240-241.

<sup>23</sup> Kermode 1998, 223-247.

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scale.<sup>24</sup> Living standards had improved for many, but it had been a bumpy ride for most and the outcomes were not necessarily positive. Bolton's summary is another reminder of the bleaker side to this long century. "Few societies in recorded history have had to cope with both severe depopulation and monetary deflation at one and the same time." Indeed, he concludes, "the inhabitants of medieval England may have been materially better off, better fed and better housed in 1500 than in 1100 or 1300, as estimated figures for per capita GDP have suggested, but life expectancy seems to have fallen in the second half of the fifteenth century, poverty was rife, links between land and people were broken and the new class of landless labourers would only benefit from high wages while the population levels remained low, as a consequence of endemic plague".<sup>25</sup> However, importantly for Norfolk and for Wighton, one market which did prosper over the century was the export of cloth and the principle raw material which the cloth-production industry depended upon was wool.<sup>26</sup> Sheep farmers who were expanding their own flocks were well placed to benefit. The expansion was rapid and brought a fundamental change in agrarian practice which, as we shall see, was of particular significance in Norfolk.

## **The decline of villeinage**

It wasn't only the increased amount of land available to ordinary people which was central to the way that economic opportunities shifted between 1350 and 1500; a fundamental change in its status made it much more attractive to acquire as an economic asset. Before the Black Death, around one half of all peasant land in England was held in villeinage, which meant that tenants were bound by the lord's manor court and were also subject to labour services and certain demeaning servile charges, such as heriot (a form of death duty) and merchet (permission to marry). Similarly, around half of the population were hereditary serfs by blood and so subject to similar demeaning incidents and denied access to the royal courts. After the Black Death, however, the numbers of hereditary serfs declined and these incidents attached to villein land were gradually diluted, as landlords found it impossible to enforce them: "works once performed conscientiously were now discharged grudgingly or not at all; many simply lapsed".<sup>27</sup>

On a local level, the timing of the demise of servile incidents on individual manors and the basis on which land was leased out, varied. Recent research by Mark Bailey based on a new survey of thousands of court rolls for 38 manors, has led him to conclude that "villein tenures effectively disappeared in England between c. 1380 and c. 1420, and personal serfdom disappeared over a slightly longer time frame between c. 1380 and c. 1450".<sup>28</sup> In Norfolk, Whittle argues that servile dues were rare after 1420.<sup>29</sup> Thus by this date, and probably before, the demeaning burdens of

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<sup>24</sup> Campbell 2012, 144.

<sup>25</sup> Bolton 2012, 259 and 304.

<sup>26</sup> Britnell 2004, 321-322.

<sup>27</sup> Bailey 2014, 46-47.

<sup>28</sup> Bailey 2014, 61.

<sup>29</sup> Whittle 2000, 37.

villein tenure had been widely watered down, which made its acquisition much more attractive to a wide range of people who were not themselves serfs or descended from serfs. Labour services were dropped or commuted, the language of conveyances lost their servile vocabulary, heriot and merchet disappeared and manorial courts began to issue copies of the court roll entry of the grant, which emulated the freeman's acquisition of a charter. (This is the origin of copyhold tenancies, which dominated for centuries thereafter.)<sup>30</sup> Villein land was increasingly granted for cash, either as a hereditary grant or a fixed-term leasehold. Since the feudal bonds which had once tied villeins to their home villages were thus being steadily and fundamentally undermined,<sup>31</sup> spirited and ambitious peasants could also now escape serfdom by moving away from their home village and negotiating a less restrictive tenure with another landlord desperate for rental income.<sup>32</sup> Even those who didn't move found that the growth of short, fixed-term cash leases meant that they could acquire land without needing to raise money for an outright purchase. First-timers could, as it were, "obtain a foot on the property ladder" and, as cash terms replaced labour services, the social stigma associated with holding land on villein or "base" tenure withered away.<sup>33</sup> This encouraged freemen, outsiders and even gentry to acquire such tenures in order to increase, consolidate and rationalise their holdings, which enabled them to reduce unit costs and cope better with the squeeze in agrarian profits in the fifteenth century.

Overall, there had, by 1420, been a seismic change in social structures and expectations which had come about in the lifetime of a single generation, during a period of pronounced economic uncertainty and in the shadow of repeated outbreaks of plague. It had created insecurity, but also opportunity, greatly adding to the quantity, range and flexibility of land available for acquisition on the local land market in places like Wighton, which, as we shall see, had a sizeable number of customary tenancies. What was the impact of this extraordinary moment of change on those living and Norfolk, and more particularly in Wighton itself?

## The picture in Norfolk

The population of Norfolk in *c.* 1300 approached half a million people, which made it comfortably England's most populous county with around 10 per cent of the country's total.<sup>34</sup> It was also one of the most densely-populated and wealthiest counties. There were on average 54.7 taxpayers per 10 square miles in early fourteenth-century England, yet 136.7 in Norfolk (the second highest ranking in the country) and, in 1334, assessed taxable wealth averaged £11.2 per

<sup>30</sup> A copyhold tenancy is one where the tenant is given a copy of the manorial court roll entry with the details and terms of his or her admission to the land (the landlord had the other copy) either for a term (including a life term) which then reverted to the lord, or one which could be inherited. It was essentially written proof of the tenancy which could be produced in court. Bailey 2014, 20-21.

<sup>31</sup> Hatcher 1994, 25.

<sup>32</sup> Whittle 2000, 310.

<sup>33</sup> Whittle 2000, 32.

<sup>34</sup> Broadberry, Campbell, Klein, Overton, and van Leeuwen 2015, 23-6.

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sq mile in England and £24.7 in Norfolk (the third highest ranking in the country).<sup>35</sup> However, population figures suggest that the county entered a long phase of relative decline after the Black Death. In 1377 Norfolk contained an estimated seven per cent of the English population, but by 1600, only four per cent. This scenario is borne out by the estimated annual growth rate of -1.16 per cent between 1290 and 1377 (compared with -0.74 per cent nationally), and -0.01 per cent between 1377 and 1600 (compared with 0.22 per cent nationally).<sup>36</sup> Norwich however, was thriving. In 1334, using the taxable wealth of its population as a measure, the city ranked below London, Bristol, York and Newcastle-upon-Tyne. But while the economies of these great commercial cities retrenched over the next 150 years, Norwich continued to prosper and, by 1524-25, it had become the second richest city in the country after London.<sup>37</sup> Central to its success was the growing importance of exported manufactured goods, especially worsted cloth, linens and other broadcloths. Production and sales boomed in the second half of the fourteenth century and the new city guildhall of 1414 was symbolic of Norwich's confidence and prosperity. Cloth remained the major industry throughout the fifteenth century and - as well as wools, dyes and other materials linked to textile production - Norwich also traded in minerals, timber, iron and luxury goods and had strong commercial links with the Low Countries and with London.<sup>38</sup> The city was not immune to wider economic forces. The years of the "great slump" certainly saw a downturn, characterised by a sharp drop in rental income in the city between 1440 and 1460. But overall it prospered. As Penelope Dunn has summarised: "the enthusiasm, perseverance, willingness to take risks and sheer sense of adventure of the mercantile elite, along with the diversity and entrepreneurial activity of its small scale traders, enabled Norwich to thrive as an important regional capital and as a principal national and international trading centre in the late Middle Ages".<sup>39</sup> Lynn too - though its international trade in wool, cloth, wine and furs had declined by the end of the fifteenth century<sup>40</sup> - still fared well compared with other ports and towns. It was ranked eighth in 1524-25, up from 11th in 1334 having overtaken Lincoln, Oxford and Boston. Yarmouth meanwhile was ranked 20th in 1524-25, when - it is also worth noting - Walsingham, next door to Wighton, was 65th, and the Norfolk towns of Wisbech (83), East Dereham (90), Aylsham (96) and Thetford (99) all made it into the richest 100 in the country.<sup>41</sup> Rural areas were well-placed to benefit from the strength of Norfolk's urban economies - and not just because of the demand for the supply of fish, meat, diary and other foodstuffs. The hundreds north of Norwich - especially Eynsford, South Erpingham and Tunstead - were key cloth-producing areas and for landless, ex-servile peasants, small-scale rural industries like these

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<sup>35</sup> Campbell and Bartley 2006, tables 18.2 and 18.3.

<sup>36</sup> Broadberry, Campbell, Klein, Overton, and van Leeuwen 2015, 23-6.

<sup>37</sup> Based on the total tax receipt paid on moveable goods. Dyer 2000, 765-767.

<sup>38</sup> Dunn 2002.

<sup>39</sup> Dunn 2002, 234.

<sup>40</sup> Carus-Wilson 1962, 199-201.

<sup>41</sup> Dyer 2000.

offered useful opportunities for those needing to supplement low incomes from small holdings.<sup>42</sup> The county's long coastline was also a huge asset and added to the diversity of the economy. Not only did a succession of ports from Lynn to Yarmouth, including a key cluster all within 15 miles of Wighton - Brancaster, Burnham Overy, Holkham, Wells and the Glaven ports of Morston, Blakeney, Wiveton and Cley - have direct access to the great trading cities of the Low Countries just across the North Sea, but they supported a fishing industry of national significance. It is no coincidence that, in 1525, the coastal stretch of north and north-east Norfolk from Brancaster to Yarmouth, including Wighton and the whole of its hundred of North Greenhoe, averaged more than 20 taxpayers per square mile. This was among the highest densities in the whole of England. Indeed North Greenhoe, along with Tunstead, also raised, per square mile, some of the highest tax revenue in the country.<sup>43</sup>

Overall, however, it was neither fishing nor cloth production but agriculture which continued to underpin Norfolk's rural economy. On the eve of the Black Death arable production dominated and so the severe contraction in grain production thereafter posed serious challenges to its economy. Yet the picture of relative long-term decline should not deflect from its continued importance. Spring-sown barley was the predominant crop, often accounting for more than 50 per cent of the grain grown in the county, and was traded up and down the East coast and across the North Sea. It was particularly favoured between 1350-1499, when demand for Norfolk barley held up better than for other grains because of its use for malt in the commercial production of higher quality ale, especially in London.<sup>44</sup> Wheat (usually sown in winter) was grown on 90 per cent of Norfolk farms, though it comprised less than a fifth of share of the total grain area from 1250-1449.<sup>45</sup> Some oats were cropped, mostly for animal fodder, while rye was grown only on the poorest soils. Legumes (principally peas) and vetches (such as broad beans and horse beans) which helped the fertility of the soil, were also grown as a food crop for both animals and people and accounted for a consistent 13 per cent of Norfolk's cropped acreage from 1250-1449.<sup>46</sup>

Along with the national trend, the emphasis of Norfolk's agrarian production was shifting, however. Campbell and Overton have observed that "not notwithstanding Norfolk's reputation as an arable producer, it is its livestock sector that emerges as consistently the more dynamic and, in certain respects, the more progressive branch of farming" during the fifteenth century.<sup>47</sup> Producers in the county enjoyed ready access to the major urban markets in south-east England and the Low Countries, and transport costs for these products were not prohibitive because their

<sup>42</sup> Whittle 2000, 309-310.

<sup>43</sup> Sheail 1968, 116, 121, 129 and 260-261. Sheail's findings are hedged by many caveats because of the number of returns missing from some parts of the country, for some dates and from certain individuals. But as an indicative account of the wider picture they represent a very strong data set.

<sup>44</sup> Britnell 2000.

<sup>45</sup> Campbell and Overton 1993, 55-57.

<sup>46</sup> Campbell and Overton 1993, 57-59.

<sup>47</sup> Overton and Campbell 1992, 385.

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products - such as butter, cheese, hides and wool - were either high in value in relation to their bulk, or could be walked to market. Cattle - with a particular emphasis on dairy animals - were “the core of Norfolk’s intensive pastoral regime” in those central and eastern areas of the county which had easy access to the markets of Norwich and Yarmouth.<sup>48</sup> But on the undulating chalk-based landscape of the north and north west, it was sheep which were of particular importance.

Although the principal breed of sheep reared in medieval Norfolk was small, produced only a light fleece (1-2lbs) and a relatively poor lambing ratio, it was well-suited to the land. The animals thrived on “the extensive poor quality pasture provided by heathland and arable stubbles and they stood folding well”.<sup>49</sup> Reared principally for their wool, there was value too in their hides, meat, milk and crucially, manure, which was vital to fertilise Norfolk’s light soils land and keep the wheat and barley fields productive.<sup>50</sup> Sheep-corn husbandry, as it is now known, allowed the sheep to feed on the stubble and other unsown land in the autumn and winter. This arrangement, known as shackage, would fertilise, or tathe, the land sufficiently well to support a new grain crop in the following season. In spring and summer, the sheep would be moved to graze on fallow land, heaths, commons or other pasture in the outfield. Grazing and tathing arrangements appeared in two basic forms: temporary, usually annual leases from the lord and normally limited to the peasant’s own land holding, or permanent, customary folding rights attached to a particular property.<sup>51</sup> The system was also self-perpetuating. Whether or not sheep farming was directly profitable from one year to another, it could not be abandoned without jeopardising the model in which sheep turned “the Norfolk sands into gold”.<sup>52</sup>

Overall, there is no doubting the importance of sheep to the county’s economy throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The sheer size of Norfolk’s contribution to the 1341-42 wool tax - more than an eighth of the total for all England, and two-and-a-half times as much as that of any other county - attests to the situation before the Black Death.<sup>53</sup> And for the next 100 years, sheep accounted for at least a third of the county’s demesne farm livestock - probably very much more than this.<sup>54</sup> Allison once argued that landlords monopolised sheep farming in medieval Norfolk and the peasantry “were limited to a small number which they were allowed to pasture with the lords’ flocks” - but he was excessively influenced by arrangements in later centuries. Peasant flocks were far more important in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries<sup>55</sup> and the size of Norfolk’s contribution to the 1341-42 wool tax can only be fully explained if the majority of

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<sup>48</sup> Overton and Campbell 1992, 378; and Campbell and Overton 1993, 76.

<sup>49</sup> Allison 1958, 103 and 106.

<sup>50</sup> “In 1436 and 1448, Netley Abbey received about half as much from renting out its flock at Kingston Deverill for manure, as it received from the total wool sales.” Hare 1985, 90.

<sup>51</sup> Bailey 2014, 44.

<sup>52</sup> Allison 1957, 14.

<sup>53</sup> Ormrod 1991, 178-9, Table 5.5.

<sup>54</sup> Campbell and Overton 1993, 77.

<sup>55</sup> Allison 1958, 99; Bailey 1990; Ormrod 1991; Overton and Campbell 1992; Stone, 2003, 21.

the sheep stock were not demesne animals, but owned and traded by peasant farmers.<sup>56</sup> While a manorial lord had an exclusive right to create folds during the medieval period, these folds "could belong to free and unfree peasants alike".<sup>57</sup> Peasants were therefore important rearers of sheep in early fifteenth-century Norfolk, though they were to lose out to major seigneurial flock-masters by the sixteenth century. Campbell and Overton point out that this transformation of the relative poverty among peasant livestock farmers during the fourteenth century "into the wealth that is so apparent at the close of the late sixteenth century, also implies a major process of capital accumulation within the peasant sector during the intervening period".<sup>58</sup>

All the evidence indicates, therefore, that sheep ownership was widely distributed among Norfolk peasants on the eve of the Black Death, many of them holding small numbers of sheep. But during the fifteenth century, in areas with lighter soils - such as those in the north of the county - it became concentrated into fewer hands as yeomen who obtained the leases to, or ownership of, fold rights were able to increase the scale of their operations significantly. The peculiar economics of East Anglian sheep farming also dictated its concentration into fewer hands. First, as we have seen, sheep rearers were working at the bottom end of the market, because the relatively poor quality of the fleeces meant that local wools fetched some of the lowest prices in England in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>59</sup> This required them to reduce unit costs as much as possible, and this was best achieved by larger flock sizes. Second, the peculiar nature of the foldcourse system meant it was not possible for East Anglian peasants to increase their flocks at will. This system meant manorial tenants often had rights to keep a limited number of sheep in the lord's fold, but they had to possess fold rights to expand their grazing arrangements. These rights were limited in number and controlled by the lord of the manor, but once held, they were a valuable resource to the lessee.<sup>60</sup>

Reducing costs of production through larger scale farming was also encouraged by the direction of wool prices, which were in long term decline between the 1320s to 1500. Overall, the price per stone more than halved from 5.51 shillings (1319-28) to 2.56 (1489-98).<sup>61</sup> There were, however, important short term fluctuations, and the first three decades of the fifteenth century were a period of growth. Between 1380 and 1397 average wool prices in East Anglia were low - at 2.595 shillings compared with a national average over the same period of 3.51 shillings. But at the beginning of the fifteenth century, the handful of price records that survive show much healthier returns - 3.5 shillings in 1405, 1418, 1421 and 1423, and 3.96 shillings in 1416. This is

<sup>56</sup> Campbell 2000, 159 (writing specifically on Norfolk). Christopher Dyer came to a similar conclusion in his study of sheep husbandry in Gloucestershire: Dyer 1995, 158.

<sup>57</sup> Bailey 2014, 44.

<sup>58</sup> Campbell and Overton 1993, 84-85. They acknowledge however that "it remains to be demonstrated that this was in fact the case. Certainly, a fuller investigation of medieval peasant livestock needs to be placed high on any future research agenda."

<sup>59</sup> Lloyd 1973, 12.

<sup>60</sup> Bailey 1990, 41.

<sup>61</sup> Lloyd 1973, 50-51, Table 4: Overlapping decennial average prices 1209-1498.

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actually higher than the national average of 3.5 shillings for those five individual years. Indeed, the data for the 20-year period from the late 1390s to the late 1410s indicates that it was a period of relatively high prices.<sup>62</sup> Meanwhile, the price of wethers between 1405 and 1415 was on its strongest ten-year run since the 1380s.<sup>63</sup> In sum, around 1410, sheep farmers in north Norfolk probably thought that they had never had it so good, especially since they were producing not only wool, but highly marketable skins, meat, milk and cheese.

From the late 1440s until the end of the fifteenth century the bare economic data looks much bleaker, with the 13-year moving average of wool prices rarely topping three shillings.<sup>64</sup> However, the market was also changing and in a way which may have helped Norfolk wool producers. During the century there was a general shift from the export market of the fourteenth century, where wool was sold direct and in bulk to foreign buyers, to the fulfilment of an increasing demand for the wool needed to fuel the growing domestic cloth industry. Markets now tended to be focused on urban centres such as Norwich - so, by 1495, the Townshends of East Raynham, who as we shall see (p. 125), had flocks in Wighton, were selling large quantities of their wool through an intermediary in the city to Suffolk cloth towns.<sup>65</sup> And despite relatively low prices, the efficiencies of larger-scale sheep management allowed farmers and landlords such as these to prosper in a spectacular way during the second half of the fifteenth century, especially from the 1480s and 1490s when rising cloth exports led to a recovery in the price of wool.<sup>66</sup> The wealth generated is evident to anyone who drives past the expensive 1520s brickwork of East Barsham Hall, less than five miles south of Wighton, which Sir Henry Fermour built out of his sheep farming profits.

The economics of sheep farming encouraged the construction of larger farm units in fifteenth-century Norfolk, and this trend corresponded with the structural change in land holdings.

Acquisitive peasants built up larger landholdings on a mixture of free, customary and leasehold tenures and those on the lighter soils targeted holdings - whether free or unfree - which included fold rights. Consequently, regional specialisation in dairy and stock rearing (on heavier soils) and sheep rearing (on lighter soils) became more pronounced in the fifteenth century.<sup>67</sup> The acquisition of fold rights, and indeed of greater wealth, among leading peasant farmers was also aided by the nationwide trend of landlords abandoning the direct exploitation of manors and leasing them to local people instead. In Norfolk, this process can clearly be traced in the obedientiary rolls of the cathedral priory which, from 1380 - and after centuries of direct exploitation - started to rent out the resources of its 17 Norfolk manors - a process finally

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<sup>62</sup> Lloyd 1973, Table 3: 13-year moving averages.

<sup>63</sup> Farmer 1991, Appendix F, 508-512.

<sup>64</sup> Lloyd 1973, Table 3.

<sup>65</sup> Britnell 2000, 1-21.

<sup>66</sup> Farmer 1991, 458.

<sup>67</sup> Bailey 2009, 22.

completed by 1430.<sup>68</sup> Some leasing of demesne land was piecemeal, enabling local people to augment their holdings; other demesnes were leased in their entirety to local gentry or to consortia of local peasants.

A growth in larger peasant holdings was especially characteristic of the century after 1390, and in the early years of the fifteenth century the most successful entrepreneurial Norfolk families were beginning to establish their landing holdings and build their flocks. The Pastons already owned about 100 acres in Paston in 1419 and the Townshends rapidly increased their holdings from the 1420s onwards.<sup>69</sup> Families such as these, once customary tenants, were as Whittle puts it, “no longer held back in their pursuit of greater wealth.” They could accumulate and engross their holdings and establish a new class of entrepreneurial yeoman farmers and rural businessmen who were also free of the social stigma of servile obligation which had formerly been attached to customary tenure. In the longer term this was to lead to the disenfranchisement of poorer tenants, whose land holdings, once protected by the unattractive nature of their servile obligations were now gradually priced out of the market.<sup>70</sup>

Interestingly, Britnell also makes the point that despite “a high turnover of families and the growth of inequality,” Norfolk was a county with a strong tradition of communal cooperation and villagers “continued to work together for certain political, economic and cultural ends.” Eastern England generally had seen some of the most effectively-organised resistance to the government during the social unrest of 1381. This organisational capacity and effective communal activity was demonstrated again through the development of village guilds, which “flourished in Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire and Norfolk in greater numbers than elsewhere in England” to “further various pious and practical objectives” - not to mention the aggrandisement of most of Norfolk’s parish churches.<sup>71</sup>

## The picture in Wighton

The national and regional overview gives us a strong context for understanding the nature of social and economic developments in Wighton during the long fifteenth century. What can we reconstruct about the particular moment in about 1410 when the parishioners decided to rebuild their church? The starting point is to try and reconstruct the population of the village. Although documentary sources are scarce, we can be sure that numbers were significantly reduced by successive epidemics in the mid-fourteenth century. No local manorial evidence survives to prove this, but figures for the institutions of new priests in Norfolk from 1349-50 reveal a mortality rate of about 50 per cent among vicars and rectors. In Wighton, three different vicars were recorded that year: Peter de Welles was replaced on June 21, 1349 only a year after arriving - and he

<sup>68</sup> Saunders 1930, 14.

<sup>69</sup> Britnell 1991b, 617-618 and Whittle 2000, 194-196.

<sup>70</sup> Whittle 2000, 306-310.

<sup>71</sup> Britnell 1991b, 623.

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disappeared from the records after this. His replacement, John Hempton, did not survive the year and also disappeared from the records. Overall, of the 60 parishes within a ten-mile radius of Wighton, 30 saw the institution of a new vicar or rector between April 8, 1349 and April 17, 1350, with three parishes (including Wighton) seeing two replacements and one, Dunton, three. Thirty one of these 35 new institutions were made between May and September 1349.<sup>72</sup> It is an attrition rate consistent with a population fall during the Black Death of about 50 per cent.

When it comes to estimating the actual population of Wighton during this period, we are again held back by a paucity of sources. Unfortunately the poll tax returns of 1377, which are usually a useful guide to establishing local population sizes, are not extant for the North Greenhoe hundred. This means we only have blunt instruments: the lay subsidy returns for 1332<sup>73</sup> and the tax assessments of 1523-24.<sup>74</sup> Estimating the population from these figures is possible, and is regularly undertaken by historians, though it does involve a good deal of educated guesswork. The figures which follow are based on such precedents.<sup>75</sup> The 102 named individuals listed for Wighton in 1332 were from the wealthiest and probably the largest households, which, allowing an average of five people per household, gives a total of about 500 villagers. But roughly two thirds of adult males were omitted from the assessment, which means adding about 200 people, representing smaller households perhaps averaging three individuals each - total 600. This produces an estimated population of 1,100 for Wighton in 1332. The tax returns of the 1520s captured a greater proportion of households and multipliers of anything between four and six have been used by different historians to estimate total populations. Wighton's 73 tax payers suggests a range of between 300 and 430 people. One other source is indicative. An unusually full register of tenants from one manor court roll in 1412 lists 104 men, most of whom were probably resident in Wighton and were probably heads of households.<sup>76</sup> The evidence is patchy and inadequate, but it is nevertheless reasonable to suppose that Wighton's population exceeded 1,000 people in the 1330s, was halved by the epidemics of the mid-fourteenth century, was around 500 people in the early fifteenth century and had declined to nearer 400 by the 1520s.

By contrast, applying the same calculations and multipliers to the local tax assessments for the neighbouring town of Little Walsingham reveals a spectacular rise - from about 330 residents in 1332 to between 956 and 1,434 in the 1520s. This remarkable performance is probably explicable entirely by its popularity as a place of pilgrimage in the later Middle Ages and the associated expansion of businesses linked to this. The rate of rise must have increased very significantly in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth centuries because the village tax assessment rose exponentially between 1449 and 1524 (see pp.127-128). The population of Wells (3 miles

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<sup>72</sup> Pobst 1996.

<sup>73</sup> TNA E179/149/9.

<sup>74</sup> TNA E179/150/212 (see Table 8 on p. 127).

<sup>75</sup> They are summarised most recently by Bailey 2007, 183-184.

<sup>76</sup> RHA WCR November 7, 1412.

to the north of Wighton) also proved resilient, at least in the long term, with about 500 residents in 1332, compared with between 400 and 600 in the 1520s, presumably because of sustained economic activity connected with fishing and maritime trade. The relative economic success of these two prominent neighbours would have generated demand for foodstuffs and other services from Wighton residents - certainly, despite a faltering population, Wighton's own tax assessment remained consistently among the three highest in the hundred throughout the period. In sum, there may have been fewer residents of Wighton, but those that survived seem to have prospered. And, judging by these tax returns, throughout the fifteenth century it was one of the richest villages in one of the two wealthiest hundreds in one of England's most prosperous counties.

Another key context for understanding long term changes to the village economy and society is the management of the main manor. From the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, Wighton was granted by the crown to a succession of aristocratic beneficiaries and, by 1372, it had become part of a lucrative clutch of possessions held by the Duchy of Lancaster in north Norfolk. These formed part of the estates controlled first by John of Gaunt, then by Henry Bolingbroke, Henry V and Henry VI and this pattern of ownership meant that Wighton did not have a resident lord personally directing life on the manor. There are certainly no records of a manor house of any size or significance, as existed for example in nearby Warham or Stiffkey, Hindringham or East Barsham. Wighton manor was probably just one of many sources of cash for its aristocratic beneficiaries, rather than an economic and social asset to be exploited by a local resident. Few manorial accounts have survived, although the survivals are fortuitously concentrated in the period of greatest interest to this study. The key documents are part of a reeve's account of 1358, a rather more detailed series for 1392, 1395, 1411, 1415-16, 1427-29, 1431-33 and 1439-40 and some extremely brief, two-line summaries in the Duchy of Lancaster returns for Norfolk for some intervening years.<sup>77</sup> The more detailed accounts reveal that the main components of the manor were not exploited directly, but were leased out to different individuals. The accounts were thus effectively rentals, recording payments received from the leased components of the demesne and the income from other tenanted lands and perquisites. Their practical purpose appears to have been to provide an overall log of payments and expenditure in order to monitor the financial health of the Duchy's manorial assets and also, no doubt, to reduce fraud.<sup>78</sup> The accounts follow a standard format, summarising income from the key rents and courts and the (minor) expenditure on expenses. Many of the sums are identical from year to year and show that the lord's demesne land "with pasture, marsh, waste, sheep folds, meadows, heath, watermill with adjacent fish ponds" was leased out as a single let to a group of two or more of the most

<sup>77</sup> See Bibliography, pp. 175-176 for a full list of the manuscript references.

<sup>78</sup> The accounts were submitted to the Receiver for Norfolk who would then make an appropriate remittance to the Receiver General who kept the Duchy's overall account. Somerville 1953, 91-93 explains the accounting structures of the Duchy. The Receiver for Norfolk in 1396-98 was John Winter - this was the period when his father, William Winter, leased, or held *gratis* (we can't be sure) Wighton Manor. William died in 1397 and it is probable that John Winter inherited the manor. He went on to become Henry IV's Receiver General of the Duchy from 1408 until his death in 1414 - see p. 162.

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prominent villagers for around £11 annually (a few significant variations are considered below). This represented about a quarter of the rental income for the manor. Outside the demesne, roughly three quarters of the estate was leased out for an income of about £31 a year. A few smaller parcels are itemised under this part of the account, but most of the rental payments were not attributed to individuals or particular holdings.<sup>79</sup> The significance of these accounts is that they reveal that the main manorial assets were leased to local people, which was probably a long-established practice and which provided real opportunities for some residents to generate personal wealth from a major economic resource.

In 1337 Wighton manor was valued at £50 12s 1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>d.<sup>80</sup> There is also some evidence that demand for land had reduced after the Black Death, with some references to waste land (*vasto*) in the 1358, 1392 and 1411 accounts.<sup>81</sup> But even after the plagues of both 1349 and 1361, the manor retained an assessed value of £50.<sup>82</sup> The surviving accounts from the early fifteenth century also suggest a net yield at around this level, and they reveal a stable - not a declining - economic position. Rents, fees and dues were largely paid in full and arrears were not a major problem. The total amount paid for rental of customary land in the 1358 account is exactly the same as that recorded for the later accounts and between 1392 and 1439 these rents varied by only a few shillings over the entire period - at their highest in 1392 (£31 6s 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>d) and lowest in 1427-29 (£30 17s 10d).<sup>83</sup> Meanwhile, the lease for the demesne land and mills steadily increased from £10 13s 4d in 1392 to £12 17s by 1431-33 (though it is not possible to be certain what was included in each lease).<sup>84</sup> While arrears are low in most of the accounts - they normally vary between 3s 6d and 20s each year - there is an indication that the manor might be having problems collecting rent in 1427-29 when the arrears given are much higher, at £6 11s 6d.<sup>85</sup> The 1420s was a decade plagued by poor harvests, so it may suggest temporary financial hardship among the Wighton tenants.

Overall, therefore, the manorial accounts indicate that Wighton was experiencing relatively stable economic conditions between the 1390s and the late 1420s. The evidence may be fragmentary, but it coincides with the picture on a wider regional and national scale. Indeed the fact that the lessees of the demesne arable, pastures and mills were enjoying increased profits suggests a degree of buoyancy which may explain why several economically ambitious newcomers arrived in the village at around this time to take up new leases. Such inward migration is deduced from analysis of the manor court rolls. The rolls surviving for the period 1383-97 contain no mention of the

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<sup>79</sup> At least one revenue stream was hived off directly for the benefit of a third party. John of Gaunt appears to have granted Sir Thomas Hungerford (bef. 1328-1397), who was chief steward south of Trent for the Duchy from 18 Feb. 1375-c. 1393, the profits from the “new” rabbit warren (*nova warrenna*) which are recorded as 10s in 1392 and 25s 6d in 1431-33 (though nil in both 1411 and 1427-29). TNA DL 29/289/4735, DL 29/290/4765, DL29/291/4786.

<sup>80</sup> CIM 1916, entry 1563.

<sup>81</sup> TNA E 199/29/54, DL 30/103/1427, DL 29/289/4738.

<sup>82</sup> CIM 1937, entry 758.

<sup>83</sup> TNA DL 30/103/1427 and DL 29/290/4765-313/5047.

<sup>84</sup> TNA DL 30/103/1427 and DL29/291/4786. In 1438-39 the lease has been fragmented, making comparisons unreliable.

<sup>85</sup> TNA DL 29/290/4765-313/5047.

family names of several of the village's more influential and enterprising individuals who rise to prominence after 1405. They include the Maygood (first recorded in October 8, 1405), Dobbes (February 19, 1406), Ederych (February 19, 1406), othe Hill<sup>86</sup> (March 22 and May 25, 1406) and the Baxster (February 19, 1406) families.<sup>87</sup> Another figure who stands out is that of Edmund atte Fenn whose family name did not appear in any of 12 surviving court rolls before February 1397 when he was listed as part of a group of men renting 21 acres in the village. After that however, he was cited regularly renting land in partnership with senior members of the community.<sup>88</sup> Another family, the Dobidos, were not cited until July 25, 1425 when Thomas Dobido was present in court. It was perhaps his grandson or great grandson, Alan, who bequeathed a quarter of malt to make the new church bell in 1491 (see p. 19, Table 2). The will of John Ade Senior (d. 1444) is also interesting because, while bequeathing 12d to the high altar and 12d to the fabric of Wighton church, it also left 6d to the high altar and 6d to the fabric of Bircham church, some 13 miles away, and requested burial in the graveyard there, suggesting a strong family connection to that village.<sup>89</sup> Perhaps Bircham was his birthplace, or that of his wife.

As well as taking on cash leases for customary land, some of these immigrant families are recorded taking on more significant manorial assets. For example, by the 1420s Edmund at Fenn held the lease of one of the manor water mills. He came to no good however, being hanged for felony in about 1432 (see p. 155). Simon Ederych meanwhile was first recorded buying 1½ acres of free land in 1406<sup>90</sup> and, by the time he died some 19 years later, he had accumulated 26 acres of base tenure land and at least 10 acres of free land.<sup>91</sup> A fuller discussion of the evidence provided by the rolls and their value to historical and social analyses follows in the next chapter (pp. 136-141).

If there were significant amounts of customary land in Wighton, it would have increased the opportunities for such entrepreneurial accumulations. It is hard to assess this because no extent of the manor has survived to provide an exact statement of such land, nor its importance relative to the size of the demesne, nor the area of land on free tenure. In general, however, large manors such as this which were held by lay aristocrats, usually contained a higher proportion of villein land - indeed, the amount of customary land on the Duchy's manor of Methwold in south-west Norfolk, for example, comfortably exceeded the area of free land.<sup>92</sup> Wighton, it seems was no exception. A manorial register or admissions book, which survives for much of the first part of

<sup>86</sup> It looks as though the name is interchangeable with atte Hill, though there is no way of being certain that these aren't two different surnames.

<sup>87</sup> RHA WCR - though William othe Hill was listed as an affeerer in these courts so he had clearly already established some credibility in the village (see p. 137).

<sup>88</sup> RHA WCR February 19, 1397.

<sup>89</sup> NRO NCC Wylbey 41.

<sup>90</sup> RHA WCR February 19, 1406.

<sup>91</sup> RHA WCR July 4, 1425.

<sup>92</sup> Kosminsky 1956, 106-8, TNA DL43.7/29B. I am grateful to Professor Mark Bailey for this reference.

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the reign of Henry VI listed 190 admissions to (and corresponding surrenders of) base tenure holdings - all of which had, by this point, been converted into cash rents.<sup>93</sup> On average there were eight admissions per year and the average size of transfer was 1.68 acres. In all, the register records that some 318.75 acres changed hands, reflecting an active market in small parcels of land and indicating that the area of customary land on the manor was large, both absolutely and proportionately. It wasn't just immigrants who were taking advantage of this resource. Indeed most villagers who held free land were also active in acquiring parcels of customary land from the manor. As we shall see in the next chapter, one of the richest men in Wighton at the time the nave was rebuilt - William Gigges (c. 1364-c. 1425) - was of sufficient social standing to purchase an entire manor, also had a share in renting demesne land from the lord of Wighton, yet he appeared regularly in the court rolls taking on base tenures. The land holdings of one of his business associates, John de Wighton (fl. 1373-1406), followed a similar pattern.

The attractiveness of customary land in Wighton would have been enhanced by the demise of servile incidents on hereditary tenure and by the availability of leasehold. As we have seen, the base tenure land in the Henry VI admissions book had all been converted to cash rents and there are no labour services recorded in any extant document associated with the manor post 1349. So it seems that all such services had been commuted to cash payments at an early date. Neither are there any references to serfs by blood in the court rolls - with the exception of one mention of a "bondman of Wighton" who appears to have paid £5 manumission to one of the manor courts controlled by Norwich cathedral priory in 1368.<sup>94</sup> The demise of servile status at such an early date is unusual for the Duchy, which had a reputation for conservatism - there were still bondmen attached to the Duchy's manor of Gimingham about 25 miles away on the east Norfolk coast as late as the sixteenth century.<sup>95</sup> However, although no serfs were recorded in the Duchy's Wighton records, some servile dues persisted until quite late. Hereditary customary land was still liable for merchet and even, occasionally, childwite (a feudal due charged for childbirth outside wedlock), despite the fact that these had ceased to be tenurial incidents on most East Anglian manors after 1349.<sup>96</sup> Merchet of 2s 6d was levied on John Hague, a thatcher, on his marriage in 1405<sup>97</sup> and, in 1413, Margaret Prentys, who lived in Lynn, was amerced 2s 8d for *gersuma* (that is childwite, or childbirth out of wedlock) on the grounds that she was also a tenant of customary land in Wighton.<sup>98</sup> Heriot was also charged on hereditary customary

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<sup>93</sup> The actual dates covered are 1421-59, with 13 years missing. The book appears to be a later copy (probably sixteenth century) of the original entries. It is preserved in the Holkham archives: HHA Catalogue of Deeds, Wighton Bundle 2, number 3. It's not possible to give exact data since several pages are damaged. The holdings are expressed in acres and rods, which are here counted as four to the acre.

<sup>94</sup> Saunders 1930, 79. Unfortunately Saunders does not make it clear which of the priory's manors this refers to.

<sup>95</sup> Whittle 2000, 43.

<sup>96</sup> Bailey 2014, 281.

<sup>97</sup> RHA WCR October 8, 1405.

<sup>98</sup> RHA WCR February 21, 1413.

tenures as late as 1425, when Simon Ederych died and his son Robert had to pay 10s to inherit his father's base tenure holding of 26 acres.<sup>99</sup>

The accounts and the court rolls also give some insights into economic and agricultural activity in the village. With two watermills and a windmill listed in the reeve's accounts, Wighton clearly had the infrastructure of a grain-growing economy. In the manor court rolls there are mentions of malt in 1406 and references to the damage done to fields of wheat, barley and oats in 1409, 1413 and 1425. And in the February leet court of that year (1425), Richard Marreham took four bushels of beans from Roger Kewe as a distress during a dispute.<sup>100</sup> Those beans may have been grown as winter fodder for cattle. These, as Campbell and Overton have pointed out, may have been a way that peasants in the village improved their social and economic lot. Kept primarily for dairy produce, from the early fourteenth century seigneurial cattle herds tended to be leased out to peasant farmers and were "a valuable source of capital, since it was the norm for the lessees to retain all or most of the calves, as well as the milk produced".<sup>101</sup> There is evidence of peasants keeping cows in Wighton in the reeve's accounts between 1392 and 1427-29<sup>102</sup> and in 1425 when William atte Hill was amerced 6d for bad commoning of his cows, so causing damage to his neighbour's corn.<sup>103</sup> Meanwhile, the "historic" grazing rights of "great cattle" were in dispute in 160 acres of land in the "Eshyardes" or "Rysbrough" area in the summer of 1576.<sup>104</sup> This was probably on high ground in the west of the parish (today the fields are still called Ashyards), but the valley along the River Stiffkey which runs through the centre of Wighton is broad and flat, and the extensive riverside pasture would have been ideal not only for grazing cattle, but also as hay meadows to produce winter fodder.

Most of the surviving evidence of economic activity in Wighton relates to sheep, however.<sup>105</sup> All the extant Wighton manorial accounts include an entry for the lease of demesne assets, including eight folds with grazing rights. The lessees of these folds are not named, but we can piece together evidence from other sources to show which of the more enterprising villagers were herding flocks of some size. For example, John de Wighton was a very wealthy merchant stapler or wool trader between 1372 and 1406 and had substantial land holdings in and around the village which identify him as a likely lessee (see p. 161). And, in a charter of 1404, John atte Mill released land (heath, fields, and pastures) which included rights to a foldcourse in Wighton

<sup>99</sup> RHA WCR July 4, 1425.

<sup>100</sup> RHA WCR February 28, 1425.

<sup>101</sup> Overton and Campbell 1992, 385.

<sup>102</sup> Men from Wells grazed their cows here, paying the lord of the manor 8½d in 1392 and 1411, and 7½d in 1427-29. TNA DL 29/289/4735; DL 29/290/4765; DL29/291/4786.

<sup>103</sup> RHA WCR, February 28, 1425.

<sup>104</sup> Letter from Nathaniel Bacon to Sir Thomas Gresham, early June 1576(?) transcribed in Hassell Smith 1979, 188-189. The fields here were also called Ash Yards in 1828 in a volume of plans of parishes on Holkham estate. This refers to the adjacent fields of Ash Yards (22 acres) and Crabbs Ash Yards (25 acres) in the west of the parish, on the border with Egmere . HHA E/G4, 54.

<sup>105</sup> Overton and Campbell 1992, Table 5, 383.

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and Hindringham to a consortium of five other villagers, including his son.<sup>106</sup> There is also plenty of evidence of an active interest in peasant fold rights in Wighton. These folds would have allowed far more limited grazing rights than the principle foldcourses controlled by the lord, but they were nevertheless a useful way for peasants to diversify, or consolidate their enterprises. The individual leases entered into the Henry VI admissions' book, some held by a single tenant, others jointly, often combined rentals of land, messuages, cottages, crofts and appurtenances, and sheep folds - which seem to suggest that they were different parcels, perhaps with customary rights attached to some of the properties.<sup>107</sup> Over the 37-year period for which the book survives, about 40 different individuals were listed as leasing or releasing a total of some 255 folds. Of course, many of these folds may have been counted more than once, but none of the recorded admissions which included folds is identical to another, so there is a strong chance that each represented a different tenancy with different folds. Whatever the answer, it is clear that fold rights were numerous and coveted in Wighton.

References in the court rolls before 1421 add some colour to the picture. Amercements for bad commoning of sheep were made on John Gloys in 1409 (see above) and, in 1413, on four other villagers whose ewes damaged crops.<sup>108</sup> In a leet court of 1406, William Golding was asked to respond to claims that he had been pasturing his sheep illegally and seven years later he was accused of ploughing on the common where it was noted that he had his own sheepcote - so he must have had a flock of reasonable size.<sup>109</sup> In the same year Gloys appeared again, keeping "a certain pasture closed at Burlond called le Pasture that ought to be open at the time of animal commoning that is to say from Michaelmas to the feast of the Purification of blessed Mary [February 2] for all commoners of the village of Wighton etc that is presented to open now as said above under penalty of half a mark".<sup>110</sup> William atte Hill's amercements in 1425, just mentioned, suggest that he also may have been taking an aggressive approach to grazing his flocks and herds.

The picture which emerges from these details and from the Henry VI admissions book, is of a community where a significant number of householders kept sheep and had access to grazing until at least the mid-fifteenth century. They were practising a classic example of highly-cooperative "sheep-corn husbandry" and, while some names stand out as operating on a much larger scale than others, more ambitious flock-masters had yet to dominate the grazing arrangements in the way in which they did by the end of the century. However some, as we shall see, had already expanded their operations and amassed sizeable fortunes, by the 1420s.

Livestock weren't the only route to riches; there were plenty of other facets to Wighton's

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<sup>106</sup> HHA Catalogue of Deeds, Wighton Bundle 2, number 2.

<sup>107</sup> In these cases all are referred to as *plicas*.

<sup>108</sup> RHA WCR February 24, 1413.

<sup>109</sup> RHA WCR February 19, 1406 and February 24, 1413.

<sup>110</sup> RHA WCR January 12, 1413.

economy. Though she is writing about the late sixteenth century, Jan Pitman's observations about Wighton and the surrounding parishes, are nevertheless pertinent to the fifteenth. "The proximity of the North Sea ensured that agriculture was not the only source of income: salt-marsh and seashore provided both a living for specialist fowlers and inshore fisherman, and a source of food and fuel for the poorer residents; a number of yeomen were ship-owners and traded with the continent; and the neighbouring ports of Wells to the west and Blakeney, Cley and Wiveton to the east encouraged all but the poorest residents to cultivate cash-crops such as labour-intensive saffron, alder and hemp. In addition, all groups were involved in a thriving cottage industry of spinning, sewing and knitting".<sup>111</sup> Wighton is three miles from the sea but the manor still had interests in saltmarsh, patronage of the port court and the fish market at Holkham, as well as access to the other ports mentioned by Pitman. Morston, Blakeney, Wiveton and Cley - all ports in Blakeney harbour - could all be reached via the River Stiffkey, so it would have been cheap and easy for Wighton villagers to run agricultural produce or other cargo down to the harbour to sell to overseas markets and traders. One such potential cargo was alder wood. The fast-growing timber was a valuable cash-crop used for charcoal production, but also scaffold poles, furniture, cross-bows, underwater piles and clog soles. In the Fine Rolls of 1427, there is a reference to a messuage with "Le Alderker" in Wighton.<sup>112</sup> The name probably refers an alder carr - an area of marshy ground along the river where the trees are grown.<sup>113</sup> Alders still grow on the banks of the Stiffkey today. Also worth noting is evidence of saffron crocuses. Walsingham was famous for producing the expensive yellow dye used on woollen cloth and there was also saffron growing in Holkham before 1449 when John Waylond's messuage of two and a half acres in Southgate, which was near the parish border with Wighton, was known as Saffrengardeyne.<sup>114</sup> The earliest hard evidence of the crop being grown in Wighton itself isn't until the 1520s when one of a series of court cases brought by- and against - the vicar involved tithes from five Wighton saffron closes valued at £5 a year. It seems from the exchanges in the case that the crop had been grown for many years.<sup>115</sup> Another specialisation - the rabbit warren - seems to have been less successful: the accounts record revenue of 10s in 1392, but nil in 1411 and 1427-29, and only 6s 8d in 1431-32.

Fishing - or at least the associated trade in stockfish - seems also to have provided lucrative opportunities.<sup>116</sup> At least one villager profited during the second half of the fourteenth century. In 1391-92, Nicholas Brandon, a stockfish-monger, left substantial property in London and in Wighton and bequeathed 6s 8d to the fabric of Wighton Church and 100 shillings for a chantry

<sup>111</sup> Pitman 2004, 4.

<sup>112</sup> CFR 1935, 256.

<sup>113</sup> Dallas 2010.

<sup>114</sup> Hassall and Beauroy 1993, 568.

<sup>115</sup> Cozens-Hardy 1938, nos. 228-232.

<sup>116</sup> Stockfish are salted herring, one of the national staples of the time.

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there.<sup>117</sup> The seashore could bring extremely valuable windfalls too. Sometime between 1421 and 1458, John Gigges of Wighton was one of three men sued by a merchant of the Hans after they acquired cargo salvaged from a wreck. The haul was claimed to be worth £230.<sup>118</sup>

That sort of entrepreneurial opportunism was not limited to maritime activities. As will be set out in the next chapter, it is clear that the more prosperous village families had extensive interests in land in other parishes, including the Gigges' lordship of the manor of Veutres in Burnham St Clement. Many other land transactions recorded in the court rolls and other documents reveal co-operative agricultural ventures, while there were other ways that villagers could develop businesses and income streams. We have already seen that the stained glass-maker, John Harrowe, came from Wighton and his workshop in Norwich became one of the most successful in the county. James Feake was described as a weaver in 1441, as was William Andrews in 1500, and it is unlikely that they were the only villagers working in cottage industries.<sup>119</sup> At a higher end of the socio-economic scale, there seems to have been a link between the village and the legal profession. In 1400, Denis Toke was confirmed as a notary,<sup>120</sup> while Sir Edmund Wyghton (d. 1484) was an active London attorney from at least 1445-68.<sup>121</sup> And an interesting entry in the 1397 court rolls amerced Nicholas Draper 18d for causing a public nuisance with 18 swans in the fields and pastures of Wighton. Rearing swans was a niche activity supplying an elite market, and Draper, who held free land in the village, had presumably built a swan pit on the river.<sup>122</sup>

Less affluent villagers would have been able to trade surplus produce and handicrafts at the market. Wighton had held a prescriptive market or forum (the older, more established markets held by custom) since at least 1201 when William de Kaion, then lord of the manor, claimed that it was being damaged by the market of the Prior of Binham in the neighbouring village.<sup>123</sup> As a result Wighton traders were granted toll-free access to Binham market.<sup>124</sup> Nevertheless the Wighton market seems to have continued trading into the fifteenth century - since the court rolls occasionally refer to the "marketsted" in the village. Two extremely unusual references to market trading also appeared in the Wighton manor court rolls of 1397 and 1406.<sup>125</sup> The rolls list a series of 1d fines levied on seven individuals *pro licencia mercandisandi*. Literally, this is a (very

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<sup>117</sup> Brandon's name survives in two documents: CPMR 1932, Roll A 28: Membr. 6 b-7 - in which, in 1387, he is recorded as a mainprise for a merchant being sued for a debt of £7 12s 6d over the supply of salt. His will, of 1391, is preserved in the LMA Court of Husting, MF Roll 120 (entry 73).

<sup>118</sup> TNA C1/71/93 (see Appendix Two).

<sup>119</sup> HHA Wighton Deeds, Bundle II, no.4 and C 1/1490/4-6.

<sup>120</sup> Bliss and Twemlow, 904. 10 Kal. May. (f. 282.).

<sup>121</sup> For example, Wyghton is listed as defence attorney in 1447 in the Court of Common Pleas (CP 40/745, rot. 432d). Probate for his will (TNA PROB 11/7/133) is dated 1484 and, though he lived in London, includes a bequest of 3s 4d to All Saints Wighton. It also refers to lands he owns in Sculthorpe, East Barsham and Wighton, which are to be sold to fund the singing of masses for his and his families' souls in the churches at Wighton and Sculthorpe.

<sup>122</sup> RHA WCR March 29, 1397.

<sup>123</sup> Blomefield 1805-1810, vol. 9, 204.

<sup>124</sup> GMFE and Dodwell 1950, no. 259.

<sup>125</sup> RHA WCR August 29, 1397 and August 19, 1406.

inexpensive) licence for the individuals living in Wighton to trade. It may be that they were being given permission to sell directly from their homes, rather than in the marketplace on market day. Alternatively, the licence might have provided them with an annual relief from tolls, in a similar way to which boroughs allowed outsiders to purchase annual relief, though the amounts paid in such bigger towns were much larger.<sup>126</sup> Either way, it is a reminder that, even at the lower ends of the economic scale, there were opportunities for villagers to supplement their incomes with petty trading. Women were also, of course, highly productive - caring for dairy animals and making butter and cheese, raising poultry for meat and eggs, tending kitchen gardens, spinning, brewing, baking, weeding and so on.<sup>127</sup>

On a much larger scale, two major construction projects a couple of miles away at Little Walsingham surely also had a positive effect on the local economy during the second half of the fourteenth century. Work on the new Franciscan friary began in 1350 and major reconstruction, almost certainly including a new nave, at the main Augustinian priory between about 1360 and 1400 were two of the largest building projects in Norfolk at the time. Wighton's tradesmen, labourers and farmers, as well as its entrepreneurs and investors, would surely here have found work, markets and other opportunities denied to many other rural Norfolk villages.

If Wighton's economy was thriving and multifaceted, it was also mutable. By the end of the fifteenth century, the economic structures had changed significantly in at least one key area of agricultural production and land use: sheep. As we have seen, although arable crops could be valuable commodities, it was livestock that presented the greatest and most flexible potential for enterprising landlords, peasants and yeomen farmers and in Wighton it was the latter breed of entrepreneur which came to the fore. The shift from smaller enterprising peasant livestock farmers to larger-scale operations of the great flock-masters which were dominating north Norfolk by the early sixteenth century came about probably because an investment in sheep was regarded as the best defence against declining agricultural revenues in the fifteenth century.<sup>128</sup> Large numbers of sheep needed large amounts of pasture and that requirement often led to the aggressive management of grazing arrangements and the enclosure of arable land, pasture and commons at the expense of local smallholders. But to what extent, and when, did such a change happen in Wighton? The Henry VI admissions book provides evidence of small-scale graziers still operating in Wighton in the 1450s, the last surviving year covered by the book being 1459. But from then until a rental of 1522-23, there is no documentary material to help chart

<sup>126</sup> I'm grateful to James Davis of Queen's University, Belfast for these suggestions. He cites comparable references: Weeks 2004, 113-17; and Watkins 1915, 57. These articles refer to *censarii*, *stallingers*, *intrants*, *gabularii*, *portmen* and *burgensibus de vento et vico* - all of whom had to pay a fee to the local lord in order to engage in commerce within the manor or town, presumably free from any tolls. It does not always apply to incomers, though these appear to be the most common group who paid such licences. Sometimes they are non-burgesses resident within a borough, paying annually for specific trading rights. Perhaps Wighton manor was using the same concept to allow certain resident individuals to pay an annual fee and be free of any tolls and perhaps other restrictions on their commercial activity - thus encouraging them to engage in trade. It may have been linked to stallage and a permanent site in the marketplace.

<sup>127</sup> Whittle 2000, 261.

<sup>128</sup> See Bailey 2014, 47; and Campbell and Overton 1993, 77-78.

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the rate at which they may have declined, nor the extent to which they may have survived. We know from the 1517 Inquisition - a nationwide investigation into incidences of illegal, forced depopulation and enclosure of arable lands to make pasture - that 120 acres of arable land in Wighton had been enclosed since the 1470s - 80 acres by Christopher Gigges and 40 by Henry Fermour.<sup>129</sup> Overall, the inquisition shows that the North Greenhoe hundred was second only to the Freebridge hundred in terms of the total proportion of land enclosed (2.47 as against 3.03 per cent),<sup>130</sup> with particularly significant enclosures in the cluster of villages surrounding Wighton - Holkham (330 acres), Great Walsingham (122 acres), Hindringham (120 acres), and Warham (110 acres).<sup>131</sup> It isn't clear what proportion of these involved the enclosure of common land, pasture, or the conversion of arable land for grazing. It is also easy, as Philippa Maddern has pointed out, to over emphasise the impact of such enclosures.<sup>132</sup> After all, 2.47 per cent is a self-evidently small proportion of village land. But combined with other evidence of major flock-masters operating in Wighton around this time, it suggests a fundamental change in the patterns of ownership and grazing since the first half of the century. As well as Christopher Gigges and Henry Fermour, Sir Roger Townshend II and John Smyth also figured prominently in the Wighton rental of 1522-23<sup>133</sup> and in the same years the muster roll assessments showed that Sir Roger, Smyth and Gigges had by far the most valuable holdings of land in the village.<sup>134</sup>

Indeed, these four men and their families expanded their operations significantly in the course of a single generation between about 1470 and 1500, though in at least one case the gestation had been a long one. The Townshends of Raynham (13 miles to the south) may have had connections with Wighton going back to before 1332.<sup>135</sup> They were certainly formalised in 1416 or 1417 when John Townshend (*c.* 1390-1466) a yeoman farmer of South Raynham married Agnes Gigges of Wighton.<sup>136</sup> She was the daughter of William Gigges who, as already noted, was one of the wealthiest men in the village. By the time Townshend died fifty years later, he owned two manors and other lands in and around Raynham worth about £40 a year and sheep pasture "provided the

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<sup>129</sup> Leadam 1893, 154 and 183. Fermour, of East Barsham, enclosed the greatest area among all Norfolk landlords - 280 acres.

<sup>130</sup> Leadam 1893, 142.

<sup>131</sup> Leadam 1893, 142.

<sup>132</sup> Maddern 2005, 59.

<sup>133</sup> HHA Davidson, Holkham 120. NB This rental, which comprises 68 folios, has been at least partly mis-dated by the archive as 1456-57 - in fact, the entries referred to here are dated 14 Henry VIII (1522-23).

<sup>134</sup> Sir Roger's assessment was left blank in the manuscript, but he is listed first, Smyth is assessed at £20, Gigges at £10. No-one else is assessed for land valued at more than five marks (Bradfer-Lawrence 1931, 54-55). There is abundant evidence for the extent of the Townshends' sheep farming: "At Michaelmas 1534 they kept over 10,000 sheep in a dozen townships near Walsingham. Between 1500 and 1522 Townshend had purchased land in Great and Little Walsingham and begun a flock at Wighton in 1510. In 1522 he augmented these holdings when he bought a manor in Hindringham" (Moreton 1990, 36).

<sup>135</sup> Five members of the "ate Tunescend" family are listed in the Wighton tax assessment of 1332 (TNA E179/149/9) including Robert. Twenty years later a Robert atte Tunescend of Wighton is cited in a commission of oyer and terminer of January 28, 1352 (CPR 1907, 274). It is a common surname however, so not proof of a connection to the Raynham Townshends.

<sup>136</sup> Roger Townshend grants land to his son and to Agnes on January 25, 1417 (RHA R27, Raynham Hen IV-Hen VI) and January 26, 1417 (RHA R32, Deeds Raynham 1401-1419).

basis for part, if not most, of his prosperity".<sup>137</sup> This clearly represented a highly successful farming operation, but it pales when compared to the empire developed over the next 30 years by their son, Sir Roger Townshend (c. 1430–1493), who, as well as developing a stellar legal career in London, also transformed the family business. By the time of his death he had raised the family to the status of local gentry, his flocks totalled some 12,000 sheep<sup>138</sup> and he had spent the enormous sum of £3,800 on land purchases, including some in Wighton, where he was lord of the manor in 1492,<sup>139</sup> and several in association with his cousins, the Gigges.<sup>140</sup> John Smyth (born in the village in 1469 and easily the richest resident in Wighton in 1523) was also a sheep farmer who probably developed his flocks a little later - from about 1500. The time frame of this consolidation of grazing interests accords with that of a similar approach by Norwich cathedral priory which was expanding its flocks and enclosing pasture in the several manors it owned in north Norfolk. It increased its total holding of sheep from 1,225 in 1475 to 4,091 in 1485 and 7,163 in 1495.<sup>141</sup> By the 1517 inquisition it is recorded as enclosing 100 acres of sheep pasture in the cellarer's manor at Hindringham, a next door parish to Wighton.

So it seems that by around 1500, the agricultural structures of the village and the surrounding area had changed significantly from the those of reigns of Henry V and VI, when at least 40 small peasant farmers in Wighton - and probably more - were renting their own small plots and rearing their own sheep. Change had been brewing for at least two or three generations, but it seems to have accelerated towards the end of the century. It is unlikely that this change came about without tension between peasant and aspiring flock-masters. Such tensions are well-documented in this part of Norfolk during the first half of the sixteenth century. Fermour, for example, was the subject of a litany of complaints from the townspeople of Fakenham in 1520 and a generation later in 1557, 42 copyholders from Wighton and Binham complained to the Duchy of Lancaster's court that the commons were being overrun by sheep owned by John Smyth.<sup>142</sup> (This was probably the grandson of the John Smyth, above). An early eighteenth century Holkham estate map (a detail showing the village centre is on p. 207) also shows that in some parts of the Wighton, notably at the western and eastern extremes, the fields are much bigger - 15 or 20 acres is typical. Some are referred to as breaks, or brecks, which usually indicates grazing land. These larger fields may have been formed by the enclosures of the sixteenth century; certainly, as we have seen, the ancient grazing rights of "great cattle" were in dispute in 160 acres of land in the Eshyarde or Rysbrough area - which borders Holkham - in the summer of 1576.

<sup>137</sup> Moreton 1992, 7-8.

<sup>138</sup> ODNB 2009.

<sup>139</sup> RHA RL Box 18/2.

<sup>140</sup> See for example, Maxwell Lyte 1902, entry A8452 in which John Gigges of Burnham, Roger Townshend, Robert Gigges of Wighton, John Gigges of South Creake and Thomas Gigges of Bermer acquire land in Burnham St Clement in 1471. Entry no 8471 in the same volume also lists him as overseer of will of John Gigges of Burnham in 1476.

<sup>141</sup> Allison 1958, 100. These figures cover only the main flocks and exclude sheep it owned, but kept in other flocks.

<sup>142</sup> Leadam 1893, 181-183; and Wood 2007, 18.

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Evidence of any stress or conflict over grazing in Wighton during the fifteenth century - if it existed - has been lost. The arrears recorded in the 1427-29 accounts, which have already been noted, probably reflect the hardship caused by a series of bad harvests but there are also some indications of economic problems during the 1440s and 1450s in the very limited documentary survivals from the period. The economic depression of these years seems, for example, to have affected the fortunes of the vicar, John Cupper, who presumably relied on the yields and returns from his tithe holdings. He paid his annual subvention of one mark (13s 4d) to the cathedral cellararer in 1440 and 1444, but failed to do so in 1445, 1447 and 1448.<sup>143</sup> The rolls note that this was on the grounds of *exilitatum* (poverty). A close examination of the Henry VI admissions book also appears to indicate a more widespread issue in Wighton. Most of the leases granted between 1421 and 1441 were to single tenants, or married couples. In fact only seven out of 106 tenancies were granted as joint tenancies and these were among the bigger holdings, with an average value of just under 19s. Between 1441 and 1459, however, the 41 examples of joint tenancies registered had an average value of just 4s 2½d. The end of the series - for the surviving accounting years 1450-52 and 1457-58 - lists 35 admissions, 23 of which were let to groups rather than individual tenants or married couples. Had parishioners discovered a new spirit of communal farming? Possibly, but more likely they were finding it harder to raise cash to take on available lets.

Nevertheless, there is also evidence that Wighton was faring better than other parishes in the hundred during the mid-century slump. By c. 1449, the poor economic climate in England generally meant that the Lay Subsidy assessment for that year was subject to a general deduction of £6,000 on a theoretical total tax take of £38,000 - that's just under 16 per cent. Deductions seem to have been applied locally with a fairly broad brush - they were made in round amounts such as £1 or 1 mark and, theoretically at least, varied according to the fortunes of the villages and towns concerned. Wighton's assessment was reduced by just 20s (10.6 per cent) to £8 9s 4d - about the same proportional reduction as Little Walsingham and Field Dalling. Other villages were granted rather higher reductions - Holkham's effective cut was about 16 per cent, and Hindringham 19 per cent.<sup>144</sup> Table 8 (right) shows the adjustments which, perhaps more significantly, confirm that - by this measure - Wighton had now surpassed Holkham and was the richest town in North Greenhoe. Outside the hundred it was on a par with the most prosperous towns in the vicinity: Cley (£10), Burnham Westgate (£9) and South Creake (£10 5s 4d). You would have had to travel south to Swaffham or Great Massingham, east to Aylsham or Cawston, or west to Docking to find a town with a significantly higher assessment.

Table 8 also summarises a record of individual contributions to Edward IV's war effort c. 1481 which has survived for seven Norfolk hundreds, including North Greenhoe. Its fragmentary nature means that it is of use for local applications only, and it can't be considered a formal

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<sup>143</sup> NRO DCN 1/2/54 and 1/2/58, DCN 1/2/59, DCN 1/2/61A, DCN 1/2/62.

<sup>144</sup> Hudson 1895.

**Table 8: Tax and lay subsidy assessments for the hundred of North Greenhoe, 1332-1524**

Village	1332		1417	c. 1449		c. 1481	1523-1524	
	assessment	number of taxpayers	assessment	assessment	reduction* (percentage)	benevolence contribution	assessment	number of taxpayers
Holkham	£9 1s 10d	53	£9 10s 0d (1)	£8 0s 0d (2)	30s (15.8%)	40s	£10 4s 4d (4)	51
<b>Wighton</b>	<b>£8 16s 0d</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>£9 9s 4d (2)</b>	<b>£8 9s 4d (1)</b>	<b>20s (10.6%)</b>	<b>80s 4d (3)</b>	<b>£10 8s 6d (3)</b>	<b>73</b>
Warham	illegible**	71	£8 0s 0d (4=)	£7 6s 8d (4)	13s 4d (8.3%)	60s (5)	illegible	-
Stiffkey	£7 7s 5d	58	£8 0s 0d (4=)	£7 0s 0d (5=)	20s (12.5%)	43s 4d	£6 14s 11d	50
Wells	£7 7s 1d	45	£8 7s 0d (3)	£7 7s 0d (3)	20s (12%)	72s 8d (4)	£11 10s 2d (2)	106
Great Walsingham	£7 1s 0d	87	£8 0s 0d (4=)	£7 0s 0d (5=)	20s (12.5%)	50s	£3 16s 6d	63
Little Walsingham	£6 8s 4d	30	£6 8s 0d	£6 0s 8d	13s 4d (10%)	110s 8d (1)	£58 3s 6d (1)	239
Hindringham	£6 6s 0d	90	£7 0s 0d	£5 13s 4d	26s 8d (19%)	50s	-	-
Egmere/Quarles	£5 8s 8d	32	£6 8s 4d	£4 0s 0d	40s 4d (40%)	-	-	-
Field Dalling	illegible	31	£6 7s 0d	£5 13s 8d	8s 4d (10.5%)	110s (2)	£8 0s 4d (5)	44
Great Snoring	£4 13s 3d	25	£5 0s 0d	£4 6s 8d	13s 4d (13.3%)	36s 4d	-	-
Binham	£4 4s 5d	62	£4 8s 0d	£3 11s 4d	26s 8d (27.1%)	44s	-	-
Thursford	illegible	21	£4 6s 0d	£1 12s 0d	15s 4d (48.9%)	-	-	-
Houghton St Giles	illegible***	29	£4 4s 0d	£2 6s 0d	none	-	-	-
Barney	£1 18s 10d	34	£4 7s 4d	£2 0s 0d	4s (9%)	26s 8d	-	-
Cockthorpe	-	-	-	-	-	66s 8d****	-	-
Source	E179/149/9		E179/149/93	Hudson 1895, 281-282		E179/242/28	E179/150/212	

\* The reduction was calculated from the 1334 assessment, published by Hudson 1895, which - in some smaller villages - varied significantly from the assessments recorded in 1332 and 1417

\*\* Its assessment in 1334 was £8. \*\*\* Village name missing from MSS. \*\*\*\* Includes Sir John Calthorpe, assessed at 40s

Table 8 shows assessments for parishes in North Greenhoe as recorded in surviving tax-raising assessments. The villages are ordered according to the amount assessed in 1332. For other years the relative positions of the parishes with the five highest assessments is given in brackets. Wighton figures consistently in the top three and has the highest assessment in 1449. Where available - in 1332 and 1523-24 - the number of tax payers in each village is also listed.

assessment - the “substantial individuals” were “approached” for a contribution.<sup>145</sup> But it is a useful indicator of wealth among more prosperous villagers in the area and, during what seems to have been a period of rapid economic and demographic change, it helps fill a long gap before the next fully-documented assessments. The entries - which include the names of some 50 contributors throughout the hundred - are also problematic, since some have no amount listed against them and others have been written in and then crossed out. But the lowest amount contributed by an individual in the hundred is 4s and the vast majority of the contributions are

<sup>145</sup> TNA E179/242/28 records individual assessments for seven Norfolk hundreds towards the benevolence raised by Edward IV in 1481 to finance a campaign against the Scots from “substantial individuals who were approached for contributions”. See note to the manuscript in the National Archives: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/e179/notes.asp?slctgrantid=481&action=3m>. For dating evidence see: [http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/e179/details.asp?piece\\_id=26415&doc\\_id=25416&doc\\_ref=E179/242/28](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/e179/details.asp?piece_id=26415&doc_id=25416&doc_ref=E179/242/28). [Both sites accessed April 30, 2017].

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for one mark (13s 4d) or more. In Wighton, four men contributed a total of just over £4. These individuals are discussed in more detail in the next chapter, but whether or not all men of means have been included, those that are listed clearly constitute an economic elite. As the table shows, the contributions from these four are among the most substantial in the hundred and the total of those contributions when compared with other villages, ensures that Wighton remains in the top three villages of North Greenhoe.

While this return clearly indicates that Wighton had a social elite with the capacity to make significant cash contributions, it also confirms a shift in the balance of the local economy. That four villagers from Little Walsingham contributed a total of £5 10s 4d, hints at the beginnings of a remarkable rise in the fortunes of the pilgrimage centre which has already been mentioned (pp. 114-115). It was a rise confirmed in a spectacular way by the assessment of 1523-24 which rated Little Walsingham at £58 3s 6d, five times greater than the figure for Wells and Wighton, which had the next highest assessments.<sup>146</sup> The much fuller non-clerical listings in the muster roll of the previous year give a more detailed insight.<sup>147</sup> This assessed income from land and the total value of moveable goods, and Little Walsingham was again established as by far the wealthiest town in the hundred. Some 35 residents were recorded as having goods worth £10, 13 of them with moveable assets over £40 and a further five worth £100 or more. Wighton however still looks exceptionally wealthy compared with other villages in the hundred - with ten residents worth £10 or more per year and two possessing goods valued at £40 or over. But now, a generation or so after the construction work on its tower and porch were finally finished, it was firmly in the economic shadow of its southerly neighbour.

## Conclusions

In the early fifteenth century, when the decision to rebuild the parish church was made, the population of Wighton was probably less than half what it had been 60 years earlier. But it was still a relatively large community of perhaps 500 people and it had the second highest tax assessment in the hundred. Residents and incomers were attracted by the availability of customary land on cash tenures, the opportunity to acquire fold rights, the long-established practice of leasing the demesne assets and a highly diversified economy. Several men had accumulated substantial holdings of free land augmented by plots of base tenure. A handful of these more economically active individuals appear to have been newcomers to the village, perhaps migrating from more conservative or restrictive manors elsewhere in the locality. Others were families of long standing in Wighton. While the economic muscle of these enterprising businessmen and land-holders may have been increasing, nevertheless a broad-based form of sheep-corn husbandry, with a significant proportion of villagers having access to grazing, was operating in the village.

Manorial accounts indicate that the economy was stable between the 1390s and the mid-1420s,

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<sup>146</sup> TNA E179/150/212.

<sup>147</sup> Bradfer-Lawrence 1931.

with a consistent income from landholding rents, increased rent from the demesne lease and few arrears. In other words, when the rebuilding of the church was being first contemplated, local economic conditions were broadly propitious. Livestock and wool prices were relatively healthy and were offering greater opportunities for profit than grain prices. Several other factors also fell to the villagers' advantage. Norfolk as a region was well-placed to weather economic headwinds and the economies of major towns were sufficiently strong that in Norwich plans were afoot to build a showpiece guildhall (1414) and, at exactly the same time, work - funded by the parishioners - was finishing on St Nicholas chapel in King's Lynn, one of the most ambitious building projects in the country at that moment. Situated mid-way between these two towns, Wighton also benefitted from other advantages of its geographical location. It was at the centre of the hundred, close to the trading ports of the coast and adjacent to the booming pilgrimage centre of Walsingham. It also enjoyed a particularly diverse economy, with significant opportunities for its villagers beyond its own common market<sup>148</sup> - which would have made it a minor trading centre in its own right - and in sectors other than agrarian produce.

These advantages may have helped mitigate the economic slump of the 1440s and 1450s, though the manorial records in this period and in the late 1420s do hint at some signs of stress. Such records are scarce for the final decades of the fifteenth century when the porch and tower battlements were being finished. However, it is clear that at this point, while it still had more than its share of wealthy parishioners, Wighton's pre-eminence as a local economic hub was on the wane and - certainly as wool prices recovered during the 1490s and probably from the 1480s onwards - its agricultural structures were changing radically. Wighton's fields, which had once been grazed by a mixed community of farmers large and small, were now being exploited by a handful of sheep barons one of whom, Sir Roger Townshend, now controlled the whole manor. Ironically, after what seems to have been centuries of relative independence and just as the social bonds of lordship had been loosened in most villages around the country, Wighton found itself under the thrall of a local lord who was a dominant force in the village economy. Just as the village which had knocked down the old nave in the 1410s had changed radically since the Black Death 65 years before, the village which finally finished the porch and tower in the 1490s was emerging from another fundamental social and economic shift.

Such is the broad story of economic and social change in Wighton during the fifteenth century. But surviving documentary sources can also tell us in much more detail about the village community, especially during the early part of the fifteenth century which is crucial to this study. The next chapter will examine what can be gleaned from this detail, with reference to how the new nave may have been funded, to the likely impact of economic conditions and changing social structures, and to the individuals who were most likely to have put their weight and financial resources behind the project.

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<sup>148</sup> Dodwell 1950, no. 259.



## ***Chapter Four***

### ***The village and the parishioners***

Chapter Three established an economic and social context for the key phases of the nave rebuilding campaign and suggested that the crucial moment *c.* 1410, when the decision to rebuild the church was made, was a propitious time in Wighton. The local economy was likely to have been relatively strong and, following the trough of the 1390s, commodity prices had shown some recovery while wages and earnings remained resilient. The challenge now is to move beyond these contextual observations to reveal the community and the individual parishioners who made the bold decision to knock down the old nave and replace it with one so much bigger, higher and more imposing. How did they manage the project and how did they pay for it? This chapter examines these questions and assesses the quality, nature and limitations of the surviving documentation and the evidence it offers about the assets and activities of those individuals and of the parish as a whole. It will consider the likely social structures of a village with no resident lord, including the status and experience of residents in roles of responsibility within the manor. Drawing on the conclusions reached about sponsorship in Chapter Two and the building costs estimated in Chapter One, it will also examine the potential funding models which may have been adopted to finance the building work and identify the most likely donors - both in the village and among those of conspicuous wealth and piety who had strong connections to Wighton. Finally, it will recover as much biographical information as possible about these men and suggest the roles they may have played in the project. And, while the bulk of the chapter will focus on the rebuilding of the nave *c.* 1410, reference will also be made to what can be known about the village between 1480 and 1505, when the porch was finished and battlements were added to the tower. No attempt has been made to characterise the village during the chancel building project of 1440-60. The paucity of extant documentation from these years prevents any attempt to reconstruct meaningful profiles of key parishioners and, in any event, its construction was funded externally by the cathedral priory cellararer and the decision to build the chancel must have been made at the same time as the nave, thirty years earlier.

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As set out in the introduction, the connection between the men who commissioned and organised construction projects of this type and the buildings they raised has been almost entirely absent from the vast majority of studies of medieval parish churches. A key reason for this, of course, is the lack of easily-accessible evidence. Where heraldry is emblazoned on bosses, or the dedications of high status burials are still legible, or where key documents or antiquarian records survive, then individual or communal sponsors have been identified or convincingly deduced by historians. Recently for example, Gabriel Byng based a doctoral study on the small, rare but rich corpus of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century churchwarden's accounts.<sup>1</sup> The so-called Black Book (see p. 52, footnote 5) underpins Sandy Heslop's short study of the communal funding of the reconstruction of St Peter and St Paul church in Swaffham from 1454. And runs of exceptionally detailed parish accounts are the bases of Clive Burgess' paper on St Mary at Hill in London and Katherine French's analysis of St Margaret's, Westminster, both of which were rebuilt at the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>2</sup> But such rich sources are extremely rare - as with the vast majority of villages and parish churches, the records of Wighton are much more unyielding and disparate than those used by these four scholars.

By contrast, this study of Wighton represents an experiment in what - in the absence of such exceptional documentation - can be recovered about how, and by whom, a late-medieval church building project was organised and funded. It is rare that the archives are completely bare and some helpful survivals have already been cited - in particular the account rolls of the cellarer at Norwich cathedral. But for Wighton, as for hundreds of other parishes, there are no manorial rentals identifying systematically which villagers held land; no extents, maps, nor surveys; no guild, nor fabric accounts, nor any churchwardens accounts earlier than at least the second quarter of the sixteenth century. And there is virtually no significant anecdotal material relating to the community or to individuals. However, although there are many gaps in the record, by casting the net widely and identifying all the surviving documentation for the manor and parish in national, regional and local archives, a substantial amount of evidence has been traced. The main obstacle to discovery is thus not so much an empty archive, but a fragmented one. Some wills, manorial accounts, court rolls, tax records and more do survive, but they are deposited in various repositories and eclectic skills are required to extract and contextualize information from them. So while, the obstacles are high, they are not insurmountable. Indeed one of the contentions of this thesis is that our lack of knowledge about who re-built parish churches stems in part from a failure to investigate more energetically the sources which do survive. This chapter will demonstrate that with energy and resourcefulness it is possible to establish many insights into the community and its leaders around the time that Wighton church was reconstructed.

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<sup>1</sup> Byng 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Heslop 2005, Burgess 1996, French 2011.

## Funding arrangements and affordability

Before this material is assessed and analysed, it is helpful to establish some context surrounding the funding and administration of medieval parish church building. By far the most thorough and recent examination of the subject is Gabriel Byng's 2014 thesis just cited. His overall contention is that, in most cases, it was a parochial elite of wealthier peasants or townsfolk - the "upper peasantry and above" - who financed, commissioned and oversaw such work. He argues that the gentry and nobility were only rarely involved and the poor contributed little of significance. "Building work was not a communal but a corporate endeavour, involving only a small proportion of the parish and under the control of the parish 'masters'". It was these men who would have had both the expendable wealth and the expertise to manage the project, which would have been organised either through existing institutions such as churchwardens, or through specially-appointed fabric committees.<sup>3</sup> The historical arguments concerning the nature and significance of the role of churchwarden are rehearsed in detail by Byng, but are not strictly relevant here, because the names of the wardens are not known, nor are the organisational structures used to oversee the building work. If the Wighton wardens were, as in many parishes, relatively junior individuals who lacked experience, then doubtless a special fabric committee, comprising men of greater stature was appointed to oversee the contracting and construction of the nave. Equally, however, those acting as churchwardens at the crucial time, may have been just such figures and so able to handle the project without the need for a special committee. In Swaffham, for example, the churchwardens who oversaw the building of the tower from 1507 included two wealthy farmers and a gentleman.<sup>4</sup> In Wighton, we may be able to identify the candidates best qualified to manage the rebuilding, but no documentation reveals the administrative structures they used.

According to Byng, the funding of parochial reconstructions might follow several different potential models. Slightly simplified, they are as follows.<sup>5</sup>

1. A communal effort by all parishioners contributing according to their means.
2. Funding provided by a religious or corporate guild or guilds.
3. Contributions from both patron and parish. Byng subdivides this depending on the number of patrons, but essentially this model amounts to a combined effort by a wealthy patron or patrons with contributions from a large number of other parishioners and, perhaps, guilds.
4. Funding by patron only. Again, this is subdivided: either a single patron, or two or more wealthy families pay for the entirety of the work.

The recent historiographical consensus allows for all these possibilities, but considers the majority of medieval church building to have followed the first model and represented a "communal"

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<sup>3</sup> Byng 2014, 4 and 14.

<sup>4</sup> Byng 2014, 46-47 and 51.

<sup>5</sup> Byng 2014.

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effort by the majority of parishioners who would have supported fund-raising events and making numerous small contributions of money, skills and materials, as well as wealthier individuals making bigger donations in cash or materials.<sup>6</sup> Byng challenges this assumption, arguing that, more often, funding was “corporate” in nature, “dominated by the village or town elite, who were also responsible for organising most parish building work”. Most peasants “had no, or almost no, expendable wealth to donate and what they did have was largely absorbed into existing fundraising structures run by the churchwardens, generating small sums committed to maintenance and other activities.” He thus rejects the financial significance of fundraising events such as ales, traditionally regarded as symbolic of the involvement of the whole parish, and argues that collections and levies “were dominated by the wealthy”. However, he does concede that “when the *per capita* wealth of the middling peasantry and the size of the upper peasantry began to increase at the end of the fourteenth century, funding could become more communal, providing the kinds of large collections that have dominated the attention of scholars, if still limited to a minority of adult parishioners”.<sup>7</sup>

The best evidence of such a broad-based collection is from the fabric accounts for the rebuilding of Bodmin church in Cornwall from 1469-71, one of only two such accounts to have survived for a medieval parish church. A list of individual donations from 451 townspeople in 1471, which forms part of the accounts, has often been cited by historians as a prime example of every parishioner donating to the cause. Byng rejects this interpretation, pointing out that Bodmin had a population of over 1,500.<sup>8</sup> However, as he himself notes, only some 49 names can be shown to have come from the same household as another donor so it is perfectly possible that the vast majority of the town’s households contributed. Looked at in this light, it is surely arguable that the parishioners of the time may have felt that this did indeed represent a universal effort. Whatever the truth of the matter, a collection such as this was nowhere near sufficient to fund the building. It raised only £50 for a construction project costing £268 17s 9½d.<sup>9</sup> The rest was raised by big contributions from religious and trade guilds (more than 40 in all) - which contributed 59 per cent of the total sum raised - and some large donations and sales of materials.<sup>10</sup>

The cost of the Wighton nave was of a similar order - about £312 - but the population was less than a third of Bodmin’s. Raising such a sum from about 500 Wighton villagers would have required an average contribution equivalent to 12s 6d *per capita*. Compare this with Bodmin, where - averaged over the whole population - the collection managed to raise only 6d a head.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Byng cites a long list of historians arguing this case, including Christopher Harper Bill, Christopher Dyer, Beat Kumin, Katherine French, Colin Platt and Colin Richmond (Byng 2014, 157-158).

<sup>7</sup> Byng 2014, 157.

<sup>8</sup> Byng 2014, 165.

<sup>9</sup> Wilkinson 1874, iv.

<sup>10</sup> Byng 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Before calculating this, I have discounted a donation of £6 13s 4d from Thomas Lucombe which is far in excess of all other donations and so distorts the averages.

An equivalent response in Wighton would have raised a total of £12 10s. What is more, the village could not fall back on its guilds in the way that Bodmin - a sizeable town with a variety of religious and trade bodies - could. Wighton's five religious guilds (there are no records of trade guilds) were probably relatively wealthy. The muster roll of c. 1524 gives a value of the assets (stock) held by each - Wighton's is the third highest in the hundred with stocks from all five of its guilds totalling £11 10s.<sup>12</sup> (Exceptionally prosperous Little Walsingham is far ahead of its neighbours with a valuation of £44, Binham is set at £17, while all the other villages have guilds with total stock worth between £1 13s 8d and £8.) These figures date from a century later than the moment we are interested in, but they clearly suggest that guild resources were restricted to a few pounds - enough to fund only the day-to-day costs of a few lights, the services of a chaplain and perhaps, in exceptional years, to sponsor a new window or just possibly an aisle.

It is certainly possible that Wighton residents had more disposable wealth than those at Bodmin and may have given more generously. We know it was one of the most prosperous villages in a wealthy region. But clearly, whether or not it was considered to be a communal effort, a very significant proportion of the cost must have been raised from a coterie of individuals who were able to donate significant lump sums. This was certainly the case at Swaffham, where a spectacular church - "one of the grandest in Norfolk" - was rebuilt by the parishioners between 1434 and the early 1500s.<sup>13</sup> As both Byng and Heslop have pointed out, the Bede Roll for 1457 identifies major donors to the fabric of this new church and cites some 31 individuals or couples made donations of 33s 4d or more.<sup>14</sup> Five alone contributed at total of about £300 between them: John and Catherine Chapman (£120), John and Margaret Plumer (£60), John Walsingham and Simon Blake (over £40 each) and Walter and Mabel Taylor (over £36). Many others among the 31 specified windows or other parts of the church and gave £5 or more. Church collections, by contrast, seem to have raised only a few shillings.<sup>15</sup>

Wighton was half the size of Swaffham which was a major market town, with a population of up to 1,000.<sup>16</sup> But its ambitions for All Saints weren't as great and it was attempting to raise much less than half the amount of money needed at Swaffham. A corpus of five Wighton parishioners donating a total of say £200 in cash or materials and supplemented by other smaller but significant donations and legacies of perhaps a few pounds, would have been enough to fund the building work. Certainly, the evidence of patronage suggested in the analysis of the fabric in Chapter Two, suggests there were at least half a dozen significant sponsors (see p. 98). Can such men - or at least a corpus of potential candidates - be identified and their financial resources estimated? It is at this point that we must consider the nature of the surviving documentation.

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<sup>12</sup> Bradfer-Lawrence 1931.

<sup>13</sup> Heslop 2005, 261.

<sup>14</sup> Byng 2014, 167, Heslop 2005, 264.

<sup>15</sup> Rix 1954, 14.

<sup>16</sup> Farnhill 2001, 104.

## Documentary sources

The key fifteenth-century documentary sources for Wighton are the Duchy of Lancaster records in the National Archives, the diocesan and cathedral records kept at the Norwich Record Office (which also holds most of the extant wills of fifteenth-century Wighton residents), the archives at Holkham, which acquired Wighton manor in the eighteenth century<sup>17</sup> and those at Raynham Hall, seat of the Townshends who held the lordship at the end of the fifteenth century. Most revealing are the manor court rolls in the archives at Raynham which record 45 courts during five consecutive decades relevant to this study: 1383-85, 1396-97, 1405-06, 1412-13, and 1424-25.<sup>18</sup> All men over the age of 14 who held manorial land were required to attend court sessions which were held, usually several times a year, in the name of the lord of the manor.<sup>19</sup> By the end of the fourteenth century the courts had four principal functions: the administration of the lord's jurisdictional rights and the income due from them; maintaining law and order; recording land transfers; and handling private complaints between individuals and recording agreements between tenants.<sup>20</sup> There was also a leet court which was convened much less frequently - in Wighton it was held annually in January or February. The leet normally had a separate agenda and was concerned with imposition of amercements - what we would today call fines - which were levied for anti-social behaviour or petty crimes, illegal encroachments and enclosures, and failure to attend court. A list of *essoins* or excuses for absence was kept and an amerce was imposed after three successive failures to attend. The leet court also raised "fines" - the equivalent of a licence fee - for brewing, baking and selling bread and ale and so on.<sup>21</sup> In the general court, much of the business focused on recording admissions to, and releases from base (villein) tenure of small plots of customary land - a fine was raised in each case. Fines were also charged for the recording of agreements and the resolution of disputes between villagers and for feudal dues such as heriot, merchet and childwite (see pp. 118-119). The main concern of the rolls was thus essentially a financial one - recording the lord's income from these many and varied court "perquisites". Although the individual fines and amercements were generally small - usually counted in pennies - when combined, they produced a significant proportion of the income generated by the manor. In 1395 for example, the annual income raised from the perquisites levied by the Wighton courts was £9 12s 8d *per annum*, which represented a busy court generating nearly 20 per cent of the manor's value.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Blomefield 1805-1810, vol. 9, 205.

<sup>18</sup> The surviving court rolls are archived according to regnal years and the parchments are gathered in a way which suggests that the keeping of the records coincided with the financial year starting at Michaelmas (September 29), with the first court of the new year held in October. The one exception to this is the roll for the court of September 22, 1384 which is bound with rolls for October 11, 1384 onwards in the Raynham archive (RHA WCR series). However, the September court is recorded on a single, independent folio and has probably been mis-filed. Otherwise the dates of the opening rolls are: October 6, 1383; October 7, 1396; October 8, 1405; October 24, 1412 and October 13, 1424.

<sup>19</sup> The Wighton rolls record between four and 11 courts per regnal year. There may be some folios missing, but surviving bailiff's accounts suggest a similar variation, recording that the general court was held five times a year in 1411-12 and 1431-33, and eight times in 1392.

<sup>20</sup> For a full account of the business of manorial courts see Bailey 2002, 167-240.

<sup>21</sup> For further discussion of this form of "licensing" see Galloway 1998, 89; and Davis 2001, 323.

<sup>22</sup> TNA DL 29/289/4735 r.

As discussed in Chapter Three, the business recorded in the rolls thus provides important information about many aspects of the village economy and society - from evidence of farming practices to an insight into certain social developments, such as the survival or demise of feudal duties. But it also reveals details of the activities, status, business and personal relationships between individuals - admissions to land are a case in point. These holdings were generally of no more than a few acres at a time (sometimes less than 1 acre) but they were often held jointly by consortia of villagers, thus revealing co-operative arrangements. They can also be indicative of men - and sometimes women - who were particularly active in accumulating land. Among the feudal dues, the charge of heriot - paid by the heirs of a tenant of customary land so that they can take over the lease from their deceased parent - can be a particularly useful source of information because it confirms not only the year of a death of a customary tenant, but also often gives an idea of the extent of the deceased holdings of manorial land. Because names were attached to all these fines, amercements, distraints and essoins, it is also possible to estimate the approximate ages and lifespans of individuals who appear regularly in the rolls.

Of great significance too, are the insights the rolls can give into the people who held the key manorial and court offices and who can therefore be considered as leading members of the community. Each year a presentment jury, responsible for presenting and judging cases in the court, was elected.<sup>23</sup> In Wighton the new jury - comprising between 12 and 15 men - was listed in October in the first roll of the financial year.<sup>24</sup> In the same court, a reeve - often referred to as collector, sometimes as bailiff - was appointed to keep the manorial accounts, and a messor was elected - another key manorial official responsible for overseeing the harvest. Later in the year, a jury of capital pledges, varying between nine to 18 men, was elected to oversee the business of the leet court.<sup>25</sup> This was also when the official ale taster was nominated and charged with overseeing the local brewing and ale trade.<sup>26</sup> Finally, throughout the year, affeerers were appointed in threes or pairs to assess the value of the fines and amercements imposed by the court.<sup>27</sup> These were all positions of significant responsibility and were important indicators of social seniority. Individuals fulfilling those roles - if not necessarily wealthy - were trustworthy and capable of taking on financial and organisational responsibilities, key attributes which would also have been necessary for the administration of the church re-building project.

While they provide valuable insights of these kinds, court rolls also suffer from significant limitations

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<sup>23</sup> Bailey 2002, 173-174.

<sup>24</sup> Jurors were recorded as elected to the general court jury on RHA WCR October 11, 1384; October 8, 1405; October 24, 1412; October 13, 1424.

<sup>25</sup> Elections to the leet jury were on January 22, 1384; January 18, 1385; February 19, 1406; January 12, 1413; January 9, 1425.

<sup>26</sup> The tasters were generally themselves amerced 3d or 4d at each leet court in Wighton. Such amercements - apparently for failing to do their job properly [*non fec offi'm*] - were in fact standard annual charges on the office holders in manor courts generally and Davis (Davis 2001, 320) plausibly suggests that they did not indicate incompetence or reluctance, but were an arrangement to "excuse" small mistakes in what was a difficult and unpopular responsibility.

<sup>27</sup> Bailey 2002, 176; Farnhill 2001, 54-55.

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as a research resource, and they have been the subject of some controversy among historians. In 1979, Zvi Razi opened a debate in an article criticising the work of the “Toronto School” of historians, lead by Professor J. A. Raftis who, during the 1960s and 1970s, published several studies of English village society based on an analysis of manor court rolls.<sup>28</sup> Much of this debate has focused on the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and has been centred principally on issues around demography and on studies spanning historical periods of many decades. This study of Wighton does not have such ambitions and does not attempt to engage in detail with theories about the nature of class distinctions within the manor or the village. Its primary concern has been to use court rolls as a tool to identify individuals holding positions responsibility within the manor and, where possible, to identify those who were most active economically. However, one or two concerns which stem from the historical debate are nevertheless germane to this analysis. Of particular relevance are the potential problems surrounding reliable identification of individual villagers named in the rolls.<sup>29</sup> This was a major issue in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries when nomenclature was imprecise, highly variable and often employed vague toponymic or occupational surnames. Fortunately, in the Wighton rolls there is much more consistency and first and last names are nearly always specified. There are some variations in spelling, but these almost invariably coincide with a change of clerk or scribe: a different hand compiled the rolls in each decade in which they survive - five in all. However, some uncertainties must be registered. For example, the name of a prominent villager, Martin de Stowe, appears often in the rolls and is spelled thus in 1383-85 (when he is a capital pledge in 1384, for example) and 1396-97.<sup>30</sup> But it is virtually certain that the Martin Stoghe, who was a capital pledge in the Leet court of 1406 and who was recorded as languishing *in extremis* later that year, is the same name spelled differently by the new scribe (the name spelled Stoghe does not appear in any earlier rolls and the name spelled de Stowe does not appear in any later rolls).<sup>31</sup> Similarly, I have felt confident in tolerating a variation in the spelling of the Gigges surname. There is a William Gigge throughout the 1383-85 rolls, William Gygge in 1396-97 and William Jygges in 1405-06, 1412-14 and 1424-25. And generally other references to William Gigges of Wighton (and to later members of the family) are spelled with similar variation, though nearly always the context suggests that it must be the same man. Slightly more problematic is the name of the vicar Thomas Fykes. Other villagers with names spelled variously Fyke, Feke, Ffyke and Feke (sometimes with an *s* at the end, sometimes not) may not be related, but a connection often seems very likely and caveats have been included where appropriate.

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<sup>28</sup> Razi 1979, Razi 1980, Poos and Smith 1984 followed by Razi’s own riposte: Razi 1985. A full historiographical background to the study and use of court rolls was then set out by Razi and Smith in 1996. This was further supplemented by Mark Bailey’s book on the English Manor in 2002, which includes a detailed analysis of the forms and concerns of the courts from the thirteenth to the fifteen centuries, and Erin McGibbon Smith’s 2012 article on the use of rolls around the time of the Black Death (Bailey 2002, 167-240; McGibbon Smith 2012). Examples of work by Raftis include Raftis 1964; Raftis 1966; Raftis 1974 etc.

<sup>29</sup> Summarised in Poos and Smith 1984, 129-130.

<sup>30</sup> RHA WCR January 22, 1384.

<sup>31</sup> RHA WCR February 19, 1406 and June 22, 1406.

It must also be remembered that the courts were concerned only with the business of the manor's own assets and tenants - in other words, the financial interests of the lord - and manors were not contiguous with, nor did they share the same concerns as the parish and village.

Again, for the historian of Wighton this is less of a problem than it might be, because unlike most villages in Norfolk where there were two or more manors based within the village boundary, here there was only one. A handful of other manors did hold some land in Wighton - including Veutres (based in Burnham Overy Staithe) and those belonging to Walsingham and Binham priories - but although detailed records for them have been lost, the holdings appear to have been relatively small. Business connected with lands held by the lord of Wighton manor in other villages is also recorded in the rolls, but it is clearly differentiated and a "foreign jury" or *inquis ex sokam*, elected on the same day as the general jury, presided over business pertaining to manorial land outside Wighton village. Membership of this jury also seems to have primarily comprised tenants who held land in the relevant villages. More problematic is the uncertainty over whether different strata of society were fully represented in the rolls. The consensus among historians is that cottagers and smallholders appeared less often than better-off tenants and large numbers of people may not have appeared at all, including labourers, servants and the landless.<sup>32</sup> Women were also heavily under-represented, though the evidence provided by the brewing and baking fines is helpful because it does give an insight into their names and activities, and it can also be suggestive of social status.<sup>33</sup>

So the rolls cannot be used to "re-populate" the village with accuracy because names were normally only recorded if they were the subject of a court decision, were registered for *essoins*, or were elected to serve on the leet and inquisition juries.<sup>34</sup> In particular, court records usually give little insight into the activities of the wealthier free men, whose interests only rarely fell within the remit of the courts but who would, nevertheless, have been among the wealthiest villagers of the time.<sup>35</sup> Fortunately, as we have seen, by the 1380s free men were increasingly willing to hold base tenure land, which no longer carried significant social stigma, so their names do appear in the rolls associated with these tenancies.<sup>36</sup> And somewhat unusually, under the local manorial conventions, even free tenants owed suit to the Wighton court and so had to pay amercements for failing to attend. This is evident firstly from the occasional addition of the phrase *ten-lib-* in lists of *essoins*; secondly in

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<sup>32</sup> Poos and Smith 1984, 134-135; and Bailey 2002, 190.

<sup>33</sup> Bread and ale were staples which might be produced in any village household, but by c. 1400, regular production of ale - for domestic consumption, for sale, or for village ales - was normally concentrated in the hands of a few (typically middle-aged and married) women from the higher social strata of the parish. It was they who were most likely to have the means to invest in the quantities of malted barley required to produce a batch most efficiently (Galloway 1998, 86-100 and Dyer 1989, 156). However, substantial or regular fines - of perhaps 2s or more - suggests that the woman in question was in business - perhaps running an alehouse from her own home (Dyer 1989, 158). Fines applied to "re-grating" or re-selling ale and bread is suggestive of lower status - the seller aiming to make a small profit by selling ale (and bread) which they had bought directly from the brewer or baker. The village bakers, licensed in court, were more often men.

<sup>34</sup> Although sometimes, as pointed out on p. 114, what seems to be a fairly full attendance list might be recorded.

<sup>35</sup> Bailey 2002, 176.

<sup>36</sup> This was the norm on Duchy of Lancaster estates. See Somerville 1953, 94-95.

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the fact that some of the tenants who were amerced - among them the Abbot of Creake and the Prior of Peterstone<sup>37</sup> - were clearly not bondmen; and finally that when these men were amerced, the amounts recorded are significantly higher than those imposed on customary tenants. The highest example was the 8s 6d levied on John de Wighton in 1396 (see p. 160) which compares with 3d for similar failures by holders of base tenure land. In the same court, John Wyche and Nicholas Draper also paid amercements connected with free land.<sup>38</sup> We know little else about them except that John Wyche inherited land from the wealthy stockfish-monger Nicholas Brandon in 1391 and that Draper kept swans (p. 122) - but at least we know their names and, as a result, the gap in our knowledge is less glaring than it might be.

If the activities of some of the wealthiest villagers were under-represented in the records of court business, other documents can help plug some of the gaps and we must give due weight to these when piecing together the upper social strata. These sources include the miscellaneous charters, deeds and grants of free land surviving in various archives - which point to the means, interests and business associates of wealthier villagers - and the more systematic evidence of the Duchy of Lancaster manorial accounts which were discussed in the previous chapter. As well as providing information about the wider economy of Wighton, the accounts - which, by happy coincidence, cover roughly the same period as the 45 court rolls - include important details about individuals, especially the local lessees who were exploiting its resources and some of the manorial office holders (information which usefully supplements some of the missing years in the court rolls). The accounts themselves were compiled by the reeve or collector and the appointment to this office was linked to the occupation of the main customary holdings on the manor.<sup>39</sup> In 1405 Thomas Toke was elected collector while holding 20 acres and in 1412 Stephen Burgeys was elected to the same position on account of his base tenure of 20 acres called Colliourland.<sup>40</sup> It is not clear whether this was the same 20 acres as Toke's, or the tenancy was rotated along with the office in order to sweeten the pill of being reeve, an unpopular role for which the holder was often also compensated in cash.<sup>41</sup> Either way, we can be sure that the holders of this office were drawn from among the upper tiers of the village hierarchy - men who were responsible and experienced enough, and who carried enough authority to fulfill the role and the means to cultivate reasonably large parcels of land. Certainly, there is a strong correlation between those who served on the court juries and those elected to the roles of collector, reeve and messor. On the role of steward - the local official charge of granting leases and setting rents - the Wighton records are, unfortunately, silent.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> RHA WCR October 11, 1384.

<sup>38</sup> RHA WCR November 12, 1396.

<sup>39</sup> On Duchy estates, the collector was usually appointed annually from the local villeins by election. On some Duchy manors however, the office was held by the tenants who held - or had been assigned - specific villein tenements (Somerville 1953, 96-97) and this appears to have been the case in Wighton.

<sup>40</sup> RHA WCR October 24, 1412.

<sup>41</sup> Across the Duchy manors generally, the holder might be compensated with a payment of between 3s 6d and 13s 4d (Somerville 1953, 97) - in Wighton the figure was 4s (see TNA DL29/289/4735, for example).

<sup>42</sup> Somerville 1953, 112-113.

If the accounts and court rolls can help reconstruct a framework of significant families and individuals - the yardlanders, yeoman and husbandmen who were most economically active in the village and those who took on the responsibility of manorial office - many other sources help to add further detail. Though brief and few in number, occasional references in state papers and taxation records provide illuminating insights. Lay subsidy returns can be used to estimate population (p. 116), and occasionally - as in that of c. 1478-85 - they contain the names of individuals with the highest assessments (p. 164).<sup>43</sup> Records kept by the Crown, such as the Fine Rolls and Patent Rolls give isolated, random but helpful insights into the activities of some of the parishioners, especially those holding free land. For example, an entry in the Fine Rolls - which were concerned with royal finances - records the confiscation of property held by Thomas Coo and Edmund atte Fenn in the late 1420s (p. 155) and is the only confirmation we have that they each held such land. Meanwhile, other Chancery records such as the Inquisitions Post Mortem can reveal significant holdings of free land by key people from Wighton families (such as the half knight's fee held by Robert Gloys in Hindringham, p. 150) and also illuminating moments of social history, such as a 1431 inquisition (a writ *de etate probanda*) to establish the majority of William Calthorpe.<sup>44</sup> As will be discussed later in this chapter, this is a highly valuable document because the inquisition proves that members of the Gigges and Gloys families from Wighton attended Calthorpe's christening in 1410 in Burnham Thorpe, a vital indicator of the social status and connections of two of the most important families in Wighton at the time. Such connections can also be gleaned from wills recorded in probate records. They are imperfect sources which normally give only a partial insight into the wealth of individuals and are very sparse in number until the second half of the fifteenth century. But they are useful for confirming approximate death dates, family relations, and, because they named the executors chosen by the deceased, trusted friends.

Meanwhile, the proceedings of other courts are another source of information. The records of the central royal Court of Common Pleas, which adjudicated over disputes between freemen (i.e. those not involving the Crown), can be used to confirm names, family relationships and the occupations and social status (gentleman, yeoman etc.) of parishioners. The archive is voluminous, largely unindexed and impractical to research as a whole, but records for a selection of years are now available in searchable form online and have provided some key details for this study.<sup>45</sup> Church documents can also offer fragmentary but potentially vital insights. An inventory of church goods made during the reign of Edward III and now in the National Archives was based on the Archdeacon's visitation of Norfolk in 1368, but it includes later notes and entries which were added in the early fifteenth century.<sup>46</sup> Critically, these entries identify four generous donors to Wighton church who died just before the nave was rebuilt.

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<sup>43</sup> TNA E179/242/28 - f6v. Unfortunately the 1377 list of tax payers does not survive for Wighton and the North Greenhoe hundred.

<sup>44</sup> TNA C 139/52/66 mm. 2-3. Also available in translation online at <http://www.inquisitionspostmortem.ac.uk/view/inquisition/23-591> [accessed May 21, 2016].

<sup>45</sup> [http://aalt.law.uh.edu/Indices/CP40Indices/CP40\\_Indices.html](http://aalt.law.uh.edu/Indices/CP40Indices/CP40_Indices.html) [accessed May 21, 2017].

<sup>46</sup> Watkin 1947.

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A rather different set of survivals contains evidence characterising the village society and economy later in the century. Although court rolls and duchy accounts are scant from this later period, as we have already seen, the Norwich Cathedral Cellarer's rolls from 1440 onwards provide an exceptionally rare but important account of the patronage, construction costs and timing of the rebuilding of the chancel of Wighton (pp. 38-42). Simultaneously, while their limitations have already been noted, the bequests set out in villagers' wills confirm vital details. Between 1480 and 1505, fourteen villagers left significant sums to the church fabric, including eight specifying allocation to the porch, tower and a new bell. These thus confirm not only the identity of donors, but the date and nature of the building work underway. Bequests in wills also identify and confirm almost universal membership of parish guilds. Finally, the topographical history of Norfolk by the eighteenth-century antiquary Francis Blomefield has already been cited as an invaluable secondary source. The entry for Wighton (one of the many completed after Blomefield's death by his collaborator Charles Parkin between 1753 and 1765) contains details of the church fabric which have since been lost - such as heraldry then extant in the window glass - and is of exceptional value in drawing links and comparisons with other villages and churches in the locality and county generally, and between families and individuals.

## **The village c. 1400-20**

These partial and diverse records yield a serviceable patchwork of certain details about the lives of many individuals who lived through the period which most interests us, but how do we connect them to the reconstruction of the church? We can be sure that this was a collaborative project, that it was expensive, time-consuming and demanding of resources over several years and that it was successful. It follows from this that the work must have been carefully and effectively organised over a sustained period and, whatever the funding model and the balance of contributions between the few and the many, at its core it required a cohort of prominent individuals who were active, experienced and respected in other areas of village life. These men would have needed the confidence and support of the community when the original decision to knock down the old nave was made and the authority and competence to cope with the many strategic and daily decisions required during the rebuilding process, the contracting of masons and carpenters, the purchase and transport of materials and so on. It is these prominent villagers and financiers, together with the men who led the administration of the manor, who were most likely to have taken charge of - and paid for - the project. They were undoubtedly men who would have left traces in the surviving documentation. This section will use such evidence to outline social and economic profiles for those individuals who would most likely have fulfilled such key roles in the rebuilding and/or financing of the nave.

It is hard to recover quite how the people of Wighton might have thought about the nature of their own community in 1410. In fact, recent historians have cautioned against the using the word "community" at all when characterising village society because it is a concept which may suggest

a distorted idea of a rather insular, self-reliant, co-operative collective.<sup>47</sup> For a start, as already mentioned, there were at least three different and overlapping entities - the parish, which was concerned with the maintenance of the church; the manor, which served the lord's interests; and the physical entity of the village, which also formed the basic unit in the administration of tax assessments and collections by the king. Furthermore, economic and social milieux stretched far beyond the parish boundaries. At least two high-profile men who originated in Wighton and who held land in the village, lived remotely from it - John de Wighton in King's Lynn and John Harrowe (aka Wighton) in Norwich. Several who were based in the village, notably William Gigges, John Gloys and the vicar, Thomas Fykes, held large amounts of land outside it and their social and business connections were drawn from a wide area. The men who held the manor during this period - William Winter and his son, John Winter - did not come from, nor live in Wighton, and their connections and patronage stemmed from a Norfolk elite associated with John of Gaunt and Henry IV himself.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, as Christine Carpenter puts it, "there was a whole world of horizontal and vertical relationships at every level of landowning society, from great nobles to very minor gentlemen".<sup>49</sup> And even migrating peasants retained links with their birthplace - occasionally asking for burial at the church where they were christened, as opposed to the parish in which they died.

In the case of Wighton, however, there was an unusually high degree of coherence and focus. Parish and village were coterminous and the manor, as we have seen (p. 139) was the only one to be based there. Its status as the hundredal town and location in the heart of that hundred (see map 2, p. 206), may also have contributed to a sense of being at the centre of things. And the fact that All Saints was appropriated to Norwich cathedral priory - one of the most powerful religious institutions in the country - may have been a source of status, which was only enhanced by the cellarer's commitment to rebuild the chancel. Another key distinguishing characteristic would have been the absence of a resident lord and thus of direct seigneurial input into the social or economic life of the parish. Perhaps as a result there may have been a greater sense of independence among the villagers. Dyer has argued that while church, state and lord may in some cases have exerted top-down control on their demesnes, they were just as likely to take advantage of leaders who emerged from within.<sup>50</sup> In Wighton, the latter scenario seems more likely. Certainly, much of the day-to-day organisation of village life was self-administered: the farming of open fields, the shacking and grazing of livestock and an economy which depended on effective bartering, would have required a high degree of co-operation between individuals.<sup>51</sup> As in most village records however, there is evidence of tension and strife in Wighton - the lynching of John Grys described below (p. 156), being one example.

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<sup>47</sup> Schofield 2003, 5.

<sup>48</sup> Walker 1990, 182-189.

<sup>49</sup> Carpenter 1994, 379.

<sup>50</sup> Dyer 1994, 418.

<sup>51</sup> Dyer 1994, 419.

With regard to the three social orders - the nobility and gentry, the clergy and the peasantry - Wighton appears to have had few if any residents who might have been considered as belonging to the first. The vast majority of villagers were peasants by birth. However, as we have seen in Chapter Three, the clear social distinctions between unfree serfs or bondmen and free men, which had applied a few generations earlier, had largely disappeared by 1410. This was a time of social mobility, when enterprising bondmen could achieve significant wealth and social elevation. In Wighton this might have been realised through sheep farming - the apparent source of the Gigges family fortunes, for example - but also through enterprise and craft. John Wighton, the glass-maker, who came from humble Wighton peasant stock was able to make a small fortune and marry his daughter into the gentry (p. 62). Some distinctions are still useful, however, and are drawn by historians in different ways. Byng and Mayhew, more concerned with establishing average income levels, opt for distinctions based on the size of land holdings. Mayhew's top tier has three classes: barons, knights and lower gentry, and two categories of peasants - large holders with more than 10 acres to which he assigns a gross annual income of £6, and smallholders and labourers with 10 acres or less and an income of £4.<sup>52</sup> Byng prefers three categories of peasantry. The "upper" tier, among which a ruling elite can often be detected, comprised yardlanders holding 30 acres or more, a "middling" tier of half yardlanders and a "lower" tier of labourers, cottagers and those with very small holdings and living at, occasionally below, subsistence level.<sup>53</sup> The individuals in this lower category are shadowy figures, no more than names in court rolls, but they may have comprised 50-70 per cent of the village population.<sup>54</sup> Dyer by contrast argues that the most important social distinctions were between those "who produced a surplus, sold produce, hired labour and tended to occupy official positions and the small holders who bought food, earned wages and lacked much status." Within these, he differentiates between households with a "primarily agricultural economy and others involved with craft work or retail trade". Occupational status was also important, "some, such as smiths, enjoying a better reputation than others, notably the miller".<sup>55</sup>

The surviving documentation does not allow us to test or impose such distinctions systematically on the early fifteenth-century population of Wighton. Nor are there are helpful epithets such as the use of "goodman" or "goodwife" attached to the names of leading parishioners as there are in the accounts of St Mary at Hill in London.<sup>56</sup> But it does provide enough insights to identify and individually profile a broad elite drawn mainly from resident landholders. I have subdivided these into an upper tier of four individuals - including the vicar himself - who, the records show, had significant wealth, high status within the village and connections well beyond Wighton. Then there is a second tier comprising some 20 villagers for which there is evidence of significant

<sup>52</sup> Mayhew 1995, 249-250.

<sup>53</sup> Byng 2014, 27 and 174-177.

<sup>54</sup> Hilton 1975, 31.

<sup>55</sup> Dyer 1994, 418.

<sup>56</sup> Burgess 1996, 266.

**Table 9: Wighton manor court jurors of 1412-13 who appear in earlier court rolls**

	<b>1412-13</b>	<b>1405-06</b>	<b>1396-97</b>	<b>1383-85</b>	<b>Offices held</b>
Wylles, Denis	general and leet	general and leet	present	all juries	Affeerer: 1385, 1405, 1406 Collector: 1399, 1409
Burgeys, Stephen	general and leet	general and leet	present	all juries	Affeerer: 1384, 1385, 1397, 1406 Collector: 1402, 1412
de Flitcham, John	general and leet	general and leet	present	all juries	Affeerer: 1397
Ward, Robert	general and leet	general and leet	present		-
Golding, William	general and leet	general and leet	present	present	Affeerer: 1412
Kelle, Peter	leet	general and leet	present	present	-
Gigges, William	leet	leet	present	present	Affeerer: 1405
Fykes, John	leet	-	present	present	Messor: 1412
Ade, Robert	present	-	present	all juries	-
atte Mill, John	present	-	present	both leets	-
Budker, John	general and leet	general and leet	present		-
Fish, James	general and leet	general and leet	present		Affeerer: 1406 (three times). Collector: 1415
Brake, Robert	general and leet	leet			-
Toke, Thomas	general and leet	general and leet			Affeerer: 1412, 1413 Collector: 1405
Wylles, Thomas	leet	leet			-
Budker, Denis	general and leet				Will be collector in 1424
Edrych, Simon	general and leet				Affeerer: 1413 Collector: 1408
Toke, Stephen	general and leet				Affeerer: 1413 Collector: 1406
Baxter, Richard	leet				

Notes: general = general court juror, leet = capital pledge on the leet court jury, present = amerced, fined or otherwise referred to in court proceedings. Source: RHA WCR

financial means and/or positions of trust and responsibility within the manor - in several cases, both conditions apply. These include the jurors of the manor court and the officers appointed for manorial duties - the reeves or collectors, affeerers, messors and ale tasters. While we are unable to assign specific responsibilities and contributions, we can be confident that it is from among these two tiers of two dozen or so men, that the financiers and administrators of the nave project were drawn. Finally, I have identified a number of individuals who were not resident in the village but, possessing both the means and motivation to make substantial contributions to the building campaign, must also be considered potential sponsors.

Details about individuals, however, are only part of the story. We have already seen in Chapter Three (p. 117) that a small number of entrepreneurial immigrants appear to have established themselves in Wighton between about 1390 and 1410, apparently bringing new energy and impetus to the local economy. But there is evidence too that their new home was a village with an already well-established social hierarchy. As Table 9 (above) shows, the composition of the manorial juries in 1412 and 1413 suggests that its members were significantly experienced and had been long term residents of Wighton. Of the 17 men who were sworn in during that year, 12

**Table 10: Wighton manor court jurors of 1424-25 who appear in earlier court rolls**

	1424-25	1412-13	1405-06	1396-97	1383-85	Offices held*
Giggs, William	leet	leet	leet	present	present	Affeerer: 1405
Flesh, John	general and leet	present	present	present		-
Giggs, John	general and leet	-	present	present		-
Kelle, Geoffrey	leet	-	present	present		-
Ade, John senior	leet	-	-	present		-
Baxter, Richard	general	leet	present			-
Maygoode, Ralph	general and leet	present	present			-
othe Hill, William	general and leet	present	present			-
Dobbes, Adam	general and leet	-	present			Will be collector in 1439
Budker, Denis	leet	general	present			Collector: 1424
Skynner, John	leet	present				-
Gloyes, Thomas	leet	present				Messor: 1424
King, John	general and leet	present				-
Cobbe, John	general	present				-
Rooke, Henry	general	present				-
Ade, Peter	general and leet					-
Andrew, William	general and leet					-
Burgeys, Thomas	general and leet					Collector: 1423
Dobbes, Thomas	general and leet					-
Ade, John	general					-
Clere, Thomas	general					-

Notes: general = general court juror, leet = capital pledge on the leet court jury, present = amerced, fined or otherwise referred to in court proceedings. \*Afeerers were not listed for these courts. Source: RHA WCR

had served as jurors seven years earlier. Seven also attended the court between 1383 and 1385 - three of them as jurors. So nearly half (seven out of 17) of the jury must have been around 50 or older and so had been attending court - and in all likelihood been serving as jurors - on and off for 30 years or more.<sup>57</sup> Eleven of the 1412-13 jury had also served, or were serving as collector,<sup>58</sup> messor or affeerer. Two more senior men, Robert Ade and John atte Mille, who had been jurors in 1383-85, were also still alive and present in court. That such an experienced and established corpus of jurors was in office at one time is unusual<sup>59</sup> and merits iteration: the re-construction of All Saints commenced at a time when a group of men from the upper tier of Wighton society had reached old age and had accumulated decades of experience as jurors and as manorial officers. They possessed the means, the expertise and the motivation and were in a strong position to undertake a project of this complexity and scale.

<sup>57</sup> A juror was likely to be at least 25 years old when first appointed and probably at least 18 to be recorded as "present" in court.

<sup>58</sup> For convenience I have used the word collector, rather than reeve in the table - the two terms were apparently used interchangeably, with collector the more common.

<sup>59</sup> See Farnhill's analysis of jurors recorded in East Anglian manor court rolls in the early sixteenth century (Farnhill 2001, 54-55).

This point is reinforced by considering the profile of the jurors 12 years later in 1424-25 (Table 10, left). By then, when the building work on the nave was finished, there had been a changing of the guard. Most of the 1412-13 generation appear to have died.<sup>60</sup> Of the five who are still active, only one, William Gigges, remained as a juror - and he was to die in 1425.<sup>61</sup> Another, Simon Ederych, also died in 1425 while a third, Denis Wylles, was languishing *in extremis* in 1424. Of the other 16 jurors in the 1424-25 court, only five had appeared in the rolls 19 years earlier (1405-06), five were first listed in 1412-13, while the remaining six jurors appear in the records for the first time. The collective experience of these younger jurors in holding office also appears extremely limited. Only the elderly Gigges was recorded as having been an officer in a previous court. The records between 1412-13 and 1424-25 have been lost so we have an incomplete picture, nevertheless the disparity in experience levels between the jurors of the two years is stark. There is some continuity - Thomas Burgeys and John Gigges have both taken over from their fathers on the general jury - but this simply serves to emphasise that, by the mid 1420s, a distinctly different generation from the village elders who had made the decisions and overseen the reconstruction of All Saints a decade earlier now had oversight of manorial affairs. It is the experienced generation before them who initiated the rebuilding work and it is those individuals who will now be profiled.

## **The parish elite**

The four individuals in this category stand out from the records as men of significant wealth with financial interests and social connections stretching well beyond the parish boundaries. The evidence is imperfect, but the sums of money and the size of the land holdings with which they are associated is proof of significant resources and economic ambitions.

### **William Gigges**

William Gigges (c. 1364-c. 1425) is the most prominent lay villager in the Wighton records of his time. His name is ubiquitous in the manor court rolls from 1383-1425, during which period he was clearly an upwardly-mobile, entrepreneurial yeoman who acquired and consolidated land holdings and diversified into a sizeable sheep farming operation.<sup>62</sup> He served regularly as a manor court juror and dozens of references confirm his involvement in renting and releasing relatively small parcels of manorial land on base tenure - usually in association with other villagers, and most notably with John Grys. Generally the family's fortunes were on an upward trajectory. By 1411 Gigges was paying an annual rent of £11 6s 8d for the principal part of the manorial demesne which he had taken over from John atte Mille (below), a lease he shared with Grys.<sup>63</sup> The amount

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<sup>60</sup> Their names no longer feature in the rolls or other documents post 1413.

<sup>61</sup> Only three of the 21 jurors serving in 1424-25 (Richard Baxter, William Gigges and Denis Budker) had served 12 years earlier in 1412-13, and only eight others had even been recorded as present. Going further back, only five men serving on the 1424-25 juries had been present at the courts 28 years previously in 1396-07.

<sup>62</sup> He was first mentioned in RHA WCR December 21, 1383 when he and his father Robert were admitted to 2 acres of base tenure land. He appeared finally in RHA WCR February 28, 1425 acquiring three pieces of land from Agnes Grys.

<sup>63</sup> TNA DL 29/289/4735.

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of arable land is not specified in the accounts but it must have been considerable, and the lease also included “pasture, marsh, waste, sheep folds, meadows, heath, watermill with adjacent fish ponds”. Demesne lessees needed considerable commercial flair and managerial ability to handle an enterprise of this size and return a profit - such enterprises presented risks, but also opportunities to amass a small fortune. Gigges’ success is implied seven years later, when he raised 100 marks (£66 13s 4d) to acquire the manor of Veutres, which had belonged to John de Wighton (who had previously also held the manor of Wighton (p. 161). Veutres was based in Burnham St Clements and comprised land in nearly all the Burnham villages, plus Holkham, Walsingham, Langham and Wighton.<sup>64</sup> Here he established his eldest son, Thomas, and the manor was to remain in the family for more than 100 years.<sup>65</sup>

In 1416 or 1417, William’s daughter, Agnes, married the wealthy sheep farmer, John Townshend (d. 1466) of Raynham,<sup>66</sup> another upwardly mobile yeoman whose family, as we have seen, was to become a dominant force in Norfolk sheep farming (p. 125). Their marriage was perhaps the first to be celebrated in the new nave of All Saints church. Gigges had impressive social and business connections too. Among his partners in the Veutres venture, for example, were William Shelton, Edmund Winter (brother of John Winter, see below, p. 162), and John Grys. Sir William Calthorpe was a witness.<sup>67</sup> Meanwhile, his second son, John, remained in Wighton, taking over the family interests in the village in the 1420s and retaining close links with the Burnham estate and with his in-laws, the Townshends, in East Raynham. The Gigges family remained an important presence in Wighton until the early sixteenth century. We can only guess at the social composition and attitudes which prevailed in Wighton. Were the Gigges considered, or did they consider themselves to be gentrified? Possibly not in 1410. But by the mid-fifteenth century, at least one branch of the family seems to have acquired such standing. His eldest son, Thomas, was described as a gentleman in 1445, though another son, John, was described as a franklin in 1457 and 1465, and the other, Robert, as a yeoman in 1463. Appendix Two gives a full account of the family in the fifteenth century.

Gigges probably died in or soon after 1425 when he was about 60 years old, a man of varied and dynamic business interests who must have travelled extensively around the county and perhaps beyond. He must have witnessed the many ecclesiastical building projects which had sprung up in his lifetime both locally and almost certainly in Norwich and Lynn. Business and family concerns would also have taken him to neighbouring villages. He could not have missed the spectacular work at the Little Walsingham priory and friary and it is virtually certain that he attended the christening of William Calthorpe at All Saints, Burnham Thorpe in 1410 and so saw its new

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<sup>64</sup> The manor was valued at £6 in 1346 (FA 1904, 517) and in 1540 a description specifies 40 acres of land, 6 acres of meadow, 60 acres of pasture, bruary [uncultivated land] and heath and 100s of rent (Maxwell Lyte 1906, entry A. 13487).

<sup>65</sup> Blomefield 1805-1810, vol. 7, 20-21.

<sup>66</sup> Roger Townshend grants land to his son and to Agnes on January 25, 1417 (R27, Raynham Hen IV-Hen VI) and January 26, 1417 (R32, Deeds Raynham, 1401-19).

<sup>67</sup> TNA WARD 2/52/177/143.

tower and nave, financed, at least in part, by the Calthorpe family.<sup>68</sup> Perhaps work on the new chancel there was also being discussed. Given his seniority, his energy, his social connections, his prominence in business matters and his ascent from local yeoman holding quantities of customary land to a lesser manorial lord, it is inconceivable that William Gigges did not play a significant role in the decision to rebuild Wighton church and in the financing of it. Most likely at some level too he was involved in the oversight of the construction work. A contribution as high as £50-£100 may not have been beyond the means of a man whose business interests were so extensive - especially if it was made over a number of years. An intriguing detail from the will of his great grandson, Robert Gigges in 1506 (see Appendix Two) suggests what William's contribution to the church might have been. Robert requests burial in the north aisle. Perhaps that was where his forebears were also buried and was the part of the church paid for by his great grandfather, William, some 90 years before. As we have seen (p. 56) the consistency of the window traceries on that side of the church is suggestive of a single donor.

### **John Gloys**

Vying for social and economic status with the Gigges were the Gloys, a wealthy, well-educated family with sheep farming interests, a history of religious benefactions, significant holdings of land in the neighbouring village of Hindringham and, like the Gigges, property in both Burnham Thorpe and Burnham St Clements. John Gloys senior (*fl.* 1384-1409) is one of the few recorded donors to All Saints at the beginning of the fifteenth century - sometime before 1406, he gave a missal *novum et bonum* to the church - a gift worth anything between £2-£14.<sup>69</sup> He is first recorded in the manor court rolls of 1384, in 1397 he defended a suit for damages of £40<sup>70</sup> and he last appears on record in the hundred court rolls on September 26, 1409 in two disputes involving theft from his claypit and claims that his sheep and lambs had damaged another man's crops.<sup>71</sup> In fact, between 1384 and 1409, his name occurs often in such presentments and legal disputes, but he does not appear as an officer or juror in any of the extant rolls.<sup>72</sup> In 1407, John and his son Robert (*fl.* 1407-31) were granted a messuage and 23 acres of free land in Burnham St Clements and Burnham Thorpe.<sup>73</sup> Another son, John Gloys junior (p. 153), was a chaplain in Burnham

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<sup>68</sup> Edmund Calthorpe, the rector until 1378, left 20s to the tower in 1383 (NCC Heydon 218) and Sir William Calthorpe was buried in the centre of the new chancel in 1420. The church was clearly rebuilt from west to east over this period.

<sup>69</sup> *The inventory of church goods tempus Edward III* (Watkin 1947, vol. I, 96-97) includes records of undated donations which have been inserted after the main entries. The entry for Wighton includes several donors (all listed in this chapter) whose names also appear in court rolls between 1384-1409. Martin de Stowe is the last to be listed after John Gloys and is described as *defuncti*. In the court rolls of 1406 he was languishing *in extremis*. The cost of the missal is based on the valuations of four missals in Swaffham church in 1454 - two at £2, one at £2 13s 4d, and a far more expensive example donated by a parishioner at £13 6s 8d (Rix 1954, 7).

<sup>70</sup> RHA WCR March 29, 1397.

<sup>71</sup> NRO NNAS S2/22/1/2.

<sup>72</sup> For example RHA WCR October 23, 1406 and June 22 1406 when in dispute with William Golding over a debt of 40s 9½d.

<sup>73</sup> TNA WARD 2/52A/178/62, March 22, 1407. Four years later Robert and John junior were granted a messuage and a croft in Burnham St Clements: TNA WARD 2/52/177/82, July 21, 1412.

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Thorpe<sup>74</sup> and held the book at the church door at William Calthorpe's christening there in February 1410, an event which Robert, and very probably John senior, also attended.<sup>75</sup>

John Gloys senior probably died between 1410 and 1412,<sup>76</sup> so he is also a prime candidate for a potential legacy towards the impending rebuilding of All Saints, and his apparent assets may have put him in the same financial league as William Gigges and able to make a contribution of possibly £50 or more. A key indication of significant wealth and influence is contained in an Inquisition Post Mortem of 1428, which confirms that Robert Gloys held half a knight's fee in Hindringham in 1428,<sup>77</sup> land which he may well have inherited from his father (no will survives, however). Like the Gigges, the Gloys family was dominant in the village until the end of century (p. 164-165), and had family connections beyond Wighton - James Gloys (d. 1471) was the Paston family scribe and chaplain from 1448.<sup>78</sup>

### **John atte Mille**

Another known and significant donor to the church was John atte Mille senior (*fl.* 1384-1412) who served as a juror in the manor court in 1384 and in 1392 was, with unnamed friends (*et soc' suis*), leasing the manorial water mill and lands in Wighton at an annual rent of £10 13s 4d. This was the same lease which was to be taken over by William Gigges.<sup>79</sup> Given the extent of this holding and assuming it was a success, he must, like Gigges, have been competent to run a large and commercial operation. Until 1404, he also held a considerable amount of free land in Wighton and Hindringham which he then sold to a consortium which included his son, John junior - who was a chaplain - and three other leading worthies of the village: William Gigges, Denis Wylles and Stephen Burgeys.<sup>80</sup> Perhaps it was then, aged 50 or more, that he sensed his end was near and was sorting out his affairs. He was certainly concerned enough for the health of his soul to donate, at about this time, an expensive book with "new additions to the great antiphonal" to the church.<sup>81</sup> Antiphons were responses probably made by the congregation to the choir or priest during the service, so the gift of new additions suggests an interest in contemporary developments in the liturgy, as well as significant wealth - two such books donated to Swaffham church were valued at a total of £20 in 1454.<sup>82</sup> In sum, although he is named

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<sup>74</sup> TNA WARD 2/52/177/82, July 21, 1412.

<sup>75</sup> TNA C139/52/66 mm.2-3.

<sup>76</sup> He almost certainly died before December 1412 since he made no appearance in the court rolls of 1412-13.

<sup>77</sup> FA 1904, 600. It was probably the Manor of Coldham Hall, with 124 acres and a foldcourse in Hindringham and Bale which was held by Thomas and Margaret Gloys and relinquished in 1457-58 (Blomefield 1805-1810, vol. 9, 229).

<sup>78</sup> Rosenthal 2010, 70.

<sup>79</sup> TNA DL29/289/4735 r. Perhaps it had been in the atte Mille family for some time - Wighton manor held part of Northall manor in Warham, and in 1343 a Peter atte Mille and John his son, both of Wighton, presented John de Halle of Wighton as rector of St Mary Magdalen, Warham apparently as a result of holding this part of Northall manor. The rights of patronage ceased after 1349. Blomefield 1805-10, 262-263 and 266.

<sup>80</sup> HHA Holkham 2. See also Chapter Three, p. 153.

<sup>81</sup> Watkin 1947, vol. 1, 96: *una quarterna cum addicionibus novis in magno antiphonali ex collacione John atte Mille.*

<sup>82</sup> Rix 1954, 8.

in relatively few records, the evidence attests to the fact that atte Mille was a senior figure, a progressive religious man with extensive secular interests and assets. He would certainly have been an influential one when it came to parish matters.

### The vicar

As religious leader of the parish, the vicar would have enjoyed high social status. In the case of Thomas Fykes (*fl.* 1398-1423) who held the office in Wighton from 1399-1423, this status must have been enhanced by the fact that his benefice had no resident lord and few, if any, gentry but also on account of his personal wealth and social connections. Fykes was rector of Brancaster from 1398-1404 (value 26 marks) and also took over as vicar at Wighton from 1399.<sup>83</sup> By the time of the rebuilding work in the 1410s he had therefore been in office for more than a decade, and was to remain so until 1423, making him the longest serving vicar of Wighton for at least a century. It is likely that this long tenure was important in first building, then sustaining momentum for the construction of the new nave. Certainly, he would have been heavily involved with the project, because it would have required considerable liaising with the cathedral priory to confirm that the cellarer was prepared to build a new chancel once the nave was finished.

Fykes, who probably died in office in 1423, or shortly after, also possessed the means to contribute to the nave financially, had he so chosen. His interests went well beyond the parish boundaries and he was connected with some of the most prominent men in Norfolk. In 1402 he was involved in a suit for debt of £31 13s 4d, and his three co-creditors included Sir William Calthorpe and John Winter.<sup>84</sup> And in 1409 he held the lordships of Shingham and Caldecote.<sup>85</sup> He was also a man of charitable intent and concerned enough for the health of his own soul to make at least one very substantial donation. In 1411-12, along with two chaplains, he gave 40 acres of land, 20 acres of heath, 22d rent, the liberty of one free fold and a moiety of a messuage in Brancaster to the abbot and convent of Ramsey in aid of their maintenance (while retaining land in Brancaster).<sup>86</sup> The cost of the licence alone for this transaction was 10 marks (£6 13s 4d).<sup>87</sup> This degree of wealth was not unheard of in a priest, though more common in a rector than a vicar.<sup>88</sup> But it was certainly in distinct contrast to the circumstances of his successor but one, John Cupper, who was in office during the rebuilding of the chancel.<sup>89</sup> On more than one occasion in the 1440s, Cupper was excused payment of his tithe of 13s 4d to the Cathedral

<sup>83</sup> Fykes was presented to the Brancaster living by Peter Baker who was vicar of Wighton from 1398-99. Baker held a farm here to which the right to appoint the rector was presumably attached (Blomefield 1805-1810, vol. 10, 302).

<sup>84</sup> TNA C 241/192/45. A similar action followed in 1411 (TNA C 241/203/4).

<sup>85</sup> Blomefield 1805-1810, vol. 7, 431 and Blomefield 1805-1810, vol. 6, 58.

<sup>86</sup> TNA C 143/443/8. The Abbott had held the manor at Brancaster since before 1066 and enjoyed substantial annual income from it - £46 13s in 1428, for example (Blomefield 1805-1810, vol. 10, 299-302).

<sup>87</sup> CPR 1909, 396-397.

<sup>88</sup> For example, John Drewe, rector of Harpley from 1389-1421, was a "man of considerable estate" (Watkin 1947, vol. 1, 188). And in 1340, Robert Thurston, rector of Cockthorpe (1338-49) was jointly granted the manors of Turteville and Curlews in his parish (Watkin 1947, vol. 1, 196).

<sup>89</sup> In office 1434-63 (Blomefield 1805-1810, vol. 9, 209).

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cellarer on account of his poverty (see p. 126).<sup>90</sup> (Admittedly, the 1430s and 1440s were a period of poor weather and economic downturn, but it indicates clearly that Cupper was struggling and had nothing like the assets enjoyed by Fykes.)

There remains a question why a man of such means would have been attracted to the role of vicar, especially since, when he took it on, he was already rector at Brancaster. The most likely answer is that he came from a local family and felt a particular connection to the village. It was probably his mother, Matilda Fykes, who died seized of a messuage and 4 $\frac{1}{4}$  acres of base tenure land in 1397 on which her son, John Fykes - presumably Thomas' older brother - paid heriot of 2s 6d.<sup>91</sup> But in the 1410s, it was Thomas Fykes who oversaw the interests of the Church and the priory during the rebuilding of the nave. He was man of significant substance and social standing, and his wealth and longevity in office, combined with his evident concern for the health of his soul, mark him out as one of the men who was virtually certain to have taken a lead in the project. Whether he made a financial contribution is open to question. Vicars and rectors were obviously more often associated with the chancel than the nave, but Richard Baston vicar of Swaffham between 1407-20, gave 40s to the rebuilding of his church, as did his successor, John Walpole (vicar 1434-36), while Robert Fuller (vicar 1465-88) gave the very large sum of £20 to the same cause.<sup>92</sup> Certainly, celibate vicars had no direct descendants to consider in their wills.

### **Chaplains**

If Fykes was the religious leader of the parish, the village chaplains would have commanded significant respect. They were essentially freelance clergy, available to conduct prayers, sing masses, serve wealthy families, officiate at low altars and fulfill other necessary religious duties. Also celibate and so with no direct heirs, they were strong potential candidates for making post-mortem donations. At least one fifteenth-century Wighton chaplain did so. Robert Bradenham (aka Kewe) who died in 1458, left 3s to the Wighton high altar, 3s 4d to the fabric, 12d each to the guilds of Holy Mary and the Holy Trinity and, perhaps more significantly from a financial point of view, a cross of gilded copper and a psalter for use in the church.<sup>93</sup> Also extant is the will of another local chaplain - William Lene (1417) - who left 10s to the fabric of All Saints and, as we have seen (p. 31), requested burial in a new chapel there.<sup>94</sup> At least two other chaplains lived in Wighton in the late 1390s: Adam Black and Geoffrey Glegge.<sup>95</sup> More contemporary to the rebuilding of the nave were chaplains who were also the sons of leading Wighton families: John

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<sup>90</sup> In 1440 and 1444, Cupper had paid an annual subvention of one mark (13s 4d) to the Norwich cathedral priory cellarer (to whose office All Saints was appropriated). In 1445, 1447 and 1448 the cellarer's rolls note that no payment was made because of *exilitatum* (poverty). NRO DCN 1/2/54, DCN 1/2/58, DCN 1/2/59, DCN 1/2/61A, DCN 1/2/62.

<sup>91</sup> RHA WCR February 19, 1397.

<sup>92</sup> Rix 1954.

<sup>93</sup> NRO NCC Brosyard 94.

<sup>94</sup> NRO NCC Hirning 40.

<sup>95</sup> Both were fined 3d for non-attendance at court on November 12, 1396.

atte Mille and John Gloys.<sup>96</sup> John atte Mille junior (*fl.* 1404-33)<sup>97</sup> held free and base tenure land in 1405 and a manorial rental worth 6s a year which was in his name in 1431-33.<sup>98</sup> John Gloys Junior (*fl.* 1410-12), the chaplain at Burnham Thorpe, was listed in the Wighton manor court essoins of the 1412, so he clearly held land in the village as well.<sup>99</sup>

At least one of these men probably officiated at the village free chapel (or chapel of ease) - called Buttehaute or Botehaut. It must have had a significant amount of glebe land, or other assets, attached to it since the warden received an annual portion of £5. The chaplain was probably paid out of this because the grant, which was in the king's gift, was used as a financial reward rather than a post to enjoy *in situ*.<sup>100</sup> Once again, the Swaffham Black Book gives an indication that even a member of the lower orders of the clergy - in this case a curate - might be in a position to give a substantial donation. William Gullet, a priest and for many years a curate at Swaffham, gave £8 to the building of the church alms houses.<sup>101</sup>

### **Other leading villagers of significant means**

We can be sure that Gigges, Gloys, atte Mille and Fykes constituted at least part of the social and economic elite in the village, with access to significant capital and with contacts well beyond the village boundaries. However, there were some 20 other men who were alive in, or just before, 1410 whose status is harder to assess, but who stand out in the records as significant figures. They were men of means who played leading roles either in the commercial life of the village or in the administration of the manor. Any one or more of them may have been considered part of the elite but there are not enough archival survivals - especially documents which would have confirmed holdings of free land - to be sure. Most of these men were certainly yardlanders - yeoman farmers who held at least 30 acres - and in several cases they probably held 60 acres or more. Some in particular were clearly committed and respected figures in the administration of the manor. This section summarises what can be known about each of those men and their potential significance in the nave project. It includes all the individuals cited in Table 9 (p. 145) which summarises leading figures in the manor courts of 1412-13, as well as those where there is evidence of substantial land holdings. In many cases there are references to sons or other relatives.

Among those men who may have had particularly significant assets is John Fykes (*fl.* 1397-1413) who was probably the older brother of the vicar, Thomas Fykes. John was messor in 1412-13, he also sat on the leet jury in 1413, but he appears only occasionally in the court rolls otherwise - for example, when paying the heriot for his mother's tenancy mentioned above (p. 152). It is likely that

<sup>96</sup> A later generation of the Gloys family, James (d. 1471) was also to become chaplain to the Paston family in the 1448 (see above, p. 150).

<sup>97</sup> He paid a fine of 4d for failing to attend court on account of his free and base tenure lands - RHA WCR October 8, 1405.

<sup>98</sup> TNA DL 29/291/4790.

<sup>99</sup> RHA WCR October 24, 1412.

<sup>100</sup> CPR Edward III 1912, 221; Harris 1826, 12; CPR Henry VI 1907, 284.

<sup>101</sup> Blomefield 1805-1810, vol. 6, 221.

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his absence from the rolls was because he held mostly free land and so was not often subject to the manor court. The wealth and connections of his brother Thomas suggest that this was the case.

Two men who figure more prominently in the record and who died just before 1410 were Ralph Toke and Martin de Stowe. Both are known and generous donors to the church. Ralph Toke (*fl.* 1384 - *c.* 1405) served on the leet juries in 1384 and 1385, and his name appears in the court rolls of 1396-97, but he had probably died by 1405, when his wife Alice paid a fine of 20s to transfer 9 acres of base tenure land to their son Stephen.<sup>102</sup> Just before his death (or perhaps through a legacy) Ralph donated a silver-gilt chalice to the church.<sup>103</sup> If this was one of the two chalices recorded in the inventories of church goods of 1552, and most likely it was, then it was then valued at either £4 2s 4d or £2 7s 8d (these valuations were purely based on the silver content) - a substantial donation.<sup>104</sup> His sons Thomas and Stephen Toke were both serving on general and leet juries and both were clearly considered to be competent and reliable men: Thomas was elected collector in 1405 and Stephen succeeded him in 1406.<sup>105</sup> Both were affeerers in 1413.<sup>106</sup> Another Toke - Denis - was probably their brother and he became a notary in 1400, a high-status occupation.<sup>107</sup> Thomas meanwhile, married well - to Emma, heiress of Martin de Stowe (*fl.* 1383-d. 1406) who was another known donor to All Saints.<sup>108</sup> De Stowe first appears in the record when he was appointed collector by the manor court in October 1383; he was a capital pledge on the leet court juries in 1384, 1385 (on both occasions with Richard de Stowe - probably his father)<sup>109</sup> and again in 1406.<sup>110</sup> He was also reeve in 1395.<sup>111</sup> A man of means who kept sheep,<sup>112</sup> he regularly acquired and released base tenure land, including a 10 acre plot in 1384.<sup>113</sup> He held at least 50 acres in the village when he died: his daughter, Emma, had to pay substantial heriot of 15s to inherit a messuage and 16 acres, and on his death in 1406, de Stowe also surrendered 30 more acres and left an unspecified amount of free land with a cottage to his wife Mabel.<sup>114</sup> He too made a valuable bequest to the church - a vestment, chasuble and, most intriguingly, two tunics with copes made of red-coloured cloth of gold.<sup>115</sup> Cloth of gold was

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<sup>102</sup> RHA WCR October 8, 1405.

<sup>103</sup> Watkin 194, vol. 1, 797.

<sup>104</sup> Walters 1940, 227-8: “one Chalice Withe the patenet of Syuer geilte weyng xix ownces... iiiii li iiis iiiid ... one other chalice with the patent of Syluer pacell gilte weyng xiii ownces ... xviis viiid”.

<sup>105</sup> NRO NRS 3347 13C4.

<sup>106</sup> RHA WCR October 24, 1412 and January 12, 1413 (Thomas is also affeerer on November 7, 1412).

<sup>107</sup> “Denis Toke of Wyghton, clerk, not married and not in holy orders” Bliss and Twemlow 1904, 287-293.

<sup>108</sup> DL 29/289/4738.

<sup>109</sup> Richard de Stowe was languishing in *extremis* in RHA WCR June, 28, 1397.

<sup>110</sup> RHA WCR October 6, 1383; January 22, 1384; January 18, 1385; February 19, 1406.

<sup>111</sup> TNA DL 29/289/4735.

<sup>112</sup> Amerced 3d for bad commoning of his ewes - RHA WCR March 22, 1406.

<sup>113</sup> RHA WCR December 22, 1384.

<sup>114</sup> RHA WCR August 19, 1406.

<sup>115</sup> Watkin 1947, 96-97: de Stowe is described as *defuncti* when the donation is entered in the record (see footnote 68, p. 149).

extremely expensive. “A principal vestment with dalmatic tunicle and cope and other necessaries of blue cloth of gold” which was bought for Swaffham church in 1454 cost £20.<sup>116</sup> He may have simply bought the fabric for the purposes of the donation, but if it came from his own wardrobe it suggests not only significant wealth, but high social status, or at least pretensions to it.<sup>117</sup>

Three more villagers stand out in the surviving records as prominent commercial figures. They all held free land (and some on base tenure from the manor), but insufficient detail has survived to know the full extent of their wealth, and though their names appear sometimes in the surviving court rolls, they are not recorded as jurors. They all also met a premature end. Thomas Coo (*fl. 1397-c. 1432*) and Edmund atte Fen (*fl. 1397-c. 1432*) were hanged together for felony sometime before July 5, 1432 and their lands were seized into the king’s hands.<sup>118</sup> Unfortunately, there are no clues as to their offence, however it occurred significantly after funds had been raised for the new nave so, given their apparent wealth, they must be considered as potential donors. Thomas Coo, described as a yeoman in contemporary documents, had recently built a new messuage in Wighton and held land as a lesser landlord in both Warham and Wighton.<sup>119</sup> He was probably the son of Thomas Coo senior and brother of William, who made agreements with William Golding (see below) in the manor court roll in the summer of 1397. Although not recorded as a manor court juror or office-holder, he was appointed ale taster in 1397.<sup>120</sup> His partner-in-crime, Edmund atte Fen was described as a husbandman in the Court of Common Pleas.<sup>121</sup> He seems to have been a newcomer to Wighton in the 1390s since the family name is absent from the record before February 1397 when he was the first named of a group of four villagers who acquired 21 acres of land in the village - one of the largest transactions recorded in all the court rolls (see p. 117).<sup>122</sup> He seems to have prospered and by the time of his death, he was tenant of a messuage, Le Alderker, one of the water-mills (Le Sherehung) and 9 acres of land in Wighton.<sup>123</sup> He was a court affeerer in 1406.<sup>124</sup>

In 1418, atte Fen had been sued for a debt for the sizeable sum of £20 by John Grys (*fl. 1384, d. 1423*) who was also referred to as a husbandman.<sup>125</sup> Grys’ name first appeared in the record in January 1384 when his father, William, was amerced 1d for non-attendance at the manor court (though referred to, John is not himself fined).<sup>126</sup> Subsequent to this, John was often recorded sharing base tenure leases and, more significantly, he held the principal part of the manorial estate, with William Gigges. So he was certainly a man of influence in the village, as well as one

<sup>116</sup> Rix 1954, 10.

<sup>117</sup> See Burkholder 2005, 133-153.

<sup>118</sup> CFR 1936, 94-95. The entry suggests the felony was committed before 1428.

<sup>119</sup> TNA CP40/677.

<sup>120</sup> RHA WCR August 29, 1397.

<sup>121</sup> TNA CP40/629d.

<sup>122</sup> RHA WCR February 19, 1397.

<sup>123</sup> CFR 1936, 94-95.

<sup>124</sup> RHA WCR February 19, 1406.

<sup>125</sup> TNA CP40/629d.

<sup>126</sup> RHA WCR January 21, 1384.

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of significant means. But despite his tenure, he apparently remained aloof from the manorial courts, not appearing as a juror or office holder in any of the extant rolls. Perhaps he was a hard man to work with. Certainly he attracted extreme resentment in 1423 when the front door of his house in Wighton was broken down and he, his son and manservant were killed by a mob 80 strong. The account, in the Paston Letters, is vivid:

*Be it remembred that where, on the nyght next biforne the feste of the Circumcision of owe Lord Jesu, the [second] yeer of the regne of Kyng Henry the Sexte, certeyns maffaisours, felons, and brekeres of the kynges peas vñknowyn, to the noumbr of iiii<sup>xx</sup> [four score] and more by estimacion, of malice and imaginacion forne thowght felonowsly, the dwellyng place of John Grys of Wyghton, in Wyghton, in the shyre of Norffolk, brokyn, and with carpenteres axes the yates and the dores of the seyd place hewen, and the seyd John Grys, and hys sone, and a servaunt man of hese by here bodyes tokyn, and fro the seyd dwellyng place by the space of a myle to a payre gawles ledden, there hem for to have hangyd; and by cause hem fayled ropes convenient to here felonowse purpos, the seyd John Grys, hese sone, and hys man there felonowsly slowen and mordered in the most orrible wyse that ever was herd spoken of in that cuntry.*<sup>127</sup>

Apparently rather more popular in the village - and a man who took his responsibilities to the community seriously over a period of 40 years - was Denis Wylles (fl. 1385, d.1424). He served as an affeerer in 1385, 1405 and 1406, collector in 1399 and 1409, and he was present in every court and served on every jury in the surviving rolls from 1384 until he died, probably aged well over 60, in the autumn of 1424.<sup>128</sup> He seems to have been preparing for his end for at least two years - between 1422-24 he relinquished five lots of base tenure land, property totalling just under 20 acres, including 10 sheep folds and a cottage with curtilages and, when languishing *in extremis* in 1424, he surrendered a plot of base tenure meadow at Watergalles.<sup>129</sup> His son Thomas continued the family tradition and served on the leet court jury in 1413.<sup>130</sup> He too kept livestock, being amerced for 6d because of damage caused by his cow.<sup>131</sup> The Katarina Wylles, who is recorded as a small-scale brewer of ale in 1406 and 1413, is probably Denis' wife.<sup>132</sup>

The evidence pertaining to Denis Wylles is consistent with a long-serving, reliable committee man who accumulated significant assets and whose long period of prominence in the manor court coincided precisely with the nave rebuilding programme. His almost exact contemporary, Stephen Burgeys (fl. 1384-1422), fits a similar profile. He must have known Wylles extremely well. Either as rivals or friends, they worked together on manor court business for up to four decades: like Wylles, Burgeys served on every jury from 1384-1413. He was also affeerer in 1384,

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<sup>127</sup> Davis 2004, vol. 1, 8.

<sup>128</sup> RHA WCR February 11, 1385; October 8, 1405; February 19, 1406; October 13, 1424.

<sup>129</sup> HHA Catalogue of Deeds, Wighton Bundle 2, number 3 and RHA WCR October 13, 1424.

<sup>130</sup> RHA WCR January 12, 1413.

<sup>131</sup> RHA WCR March 22, 1406.

<sup>132</sup> RHA WCR February 19, 1406 and January 12, 1413.

1385, 1397 and 1406,<sup>133</sup> and as well as this sort of committee work, he was trusted by the Duchy of Lancaster to act as collector in 1402-04 and again in 1412, when he held a 20-acre base tenure plot, Colliourlond.<sup>134</sup> In 1422 or 1423 he had also released 3½ acres of base tenure land and 10 folds to his son Thomas,<sup>135</sup> who followed in his footsteps as collector in 1423 and 1431 and who died intestate in 1437.<sup>136</sup>

Among the jurors who served with Fykes, Burgeys and Wylles in 1413, the one with the most significant recorded assets was Simon Ederych (*fl.* 1406-d. 1425). An apparent newcomer to the village, neither he nor his family name appears in the court rolls before March 1406 when he was admitted to 1½ acres of base tenure land which had been released by Edmund atte Fen.<sup>137</sup> But he seems to have integrated successfully: by 1408 he had been elected collector, in 1413 he was elected as a leet and general court juror and an affeerer<sup>138</sup> and, by the time he died in 1425, Ederych had accumulated a significant holding of land. On his father's death, Robert Ederych paid 10s heriot for a base tenure holding of 26 acres and a further fine (*relens*) of 3s 5½d on 10 acres 1½ rods of free land, all in Wighton.<sup>139</sup>

Another newcomer who prospered and was elected to the juries of 1412-13, was the village baker, Richard Baxster (*fl.* 1405-25). He also held small amounts of land - such as the 6½ acres on base tenure which he rented (together with John Flesch) in 1406.<sup>140</sup> Meanwhile, William Golding (*fl.* 1384-13) also baked, but on a smaller scale and probably only occasionally as a sideline to his sheep-farming business. A village elder by 1410, he was very much part of the manorial establishment who served on the general and leet court juries in 1405-06 and 1412-13.<sup>141</sup> He held free land and in 1407, along with five men from South Creake, he surrendered two messuages and what seems to be a significant acreage in that village.<sup>142</sup> In Wighton, he also had his own his own sheepcote out on the heath, so he must have been a sizeable sheep rearer.<sup>143</sup>

The assets of the village innkeepers are harder to deduce. Isabel Kelle (*fl.* 1396-1413) was one of the biggest brewers in the village between 1397 and 1413, and was almost certainly the wife of Geoffrey Kelle (*fl.* 1396-1425) who must have been a respected figure because he was appointed

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<sup>133</sup> RHA WCR January 22, 1384; February 11, 1385; March 29, 1397; June 22, 1406.

<sup>134</sup> TNA DL29/310/4981 r. and RHA WCR October 24, 1412.

<sup>135</sup> HHA Wighton Deeds, Bundle 2, number 3, fol. 2.

<sup>136</sup> TNA DL 29/291/4790, NRO NRS 3355 13C5 and NRO NCC Doke 3 (an administration order for his estate).

<sup>137</sup> RHA WCR March 22, 1406.

<sup>138</sup> NRO NRS 3348 13C4, RHA WCR January 12, 1413.

<sup>139</sup> RHA WCR July 4, 1425. In 1429-31 Robert released a base tenure holding of 28.5 acres which included 30 sheep folds to Robert Blogg and a group of other villagers who paid 40s to be admitted to the land. HHA Wighton Deeds, Bundle 2, number 3.

<sup>140</sup> Baxster paid fines to be licensed as a baker in 1406 (12d), 1413 (12d) and 1425 (6d).

<sup>141</sup> He paid a 6d fine for baking in the 1413 leet court.

<sup>142</sup> RHA WCR October 11, 1384 (12d amerce for non attendance) and Legge 1898, 106.

<sup>143</sup> RHA WCR February 24, 1413 - see also Chapter Three, p21.

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collector in 1396 and 1403-05.<sup>144</sup> It was probably his son Peter, a sheep farmer,<sup>145</sup> who was a juror in 1413. Geoffrey didn't serve that year, but he (or another descendant) was on the leet court jury of 1425. Meanwhile, John de Flitcham (*fl.* 1384-1413), who sat on every jury from 1383-1413, also had connections with the inn-keeping trade. He was probably either the son or husband of Celia de Flitcham who was the biggest brewer in the village in 1383-85. Often recorded in the court rolls renting and releasing small amount of base tenure land, he also seems to have had interests outside the village - in 1406, along with three others, he released lands in Flitcham.<sup>146</sup>

There is little of consequence in the records to distinguish the other six jurors of 1412-13 cited in Table 9, apart from regular service as court officials and a smattering of fines and amercements which suggests that they rented manorial land on a fairly small scale. One or two may have been yardlanders, with total holdings above 30 acres. In 1397, Robert Brake for example, was one of a consortium of four who acceded to one of the biggest admissions to land - 21 acres and one rod, paying a significant fine of 46s 8d.<sup>147</sup> And James Fish, who was on also on the juries of 1405-06 (when he was also affeerer three times), was collector in 1415 and released a messuage with 14 sheep folds in 1422-24.<sup>148</sup>

There are other names who also figure in the rolls, some of whom may have had significant assets: as we have seen, a low profile in the records does not necessarily equate to a lack of substance, and absence from the court rolls does not imply no involvement in parish matters. But the men and families cited above are the best-documented and most readily-reconstructed members of the Wighton parochial elite in the first quarter of the fifteenth century. In a prosperous village of about 500 inhabitants, there were certainly others with strong characters, generous spirits and/or pious intentions. There would have been many men with skills or materials to donate, labourers willing to lend some muscle, householders prepared to offer accommodation to visiting craftsmen. Some villagers may have received windfalls from relatives, others may have died without heirs and made generous bequests. These facts cannot be known, but we do know that the nave project was a complex one which probably took place over several years, and the villagers whose names have now emerged from the records after so many centuries of anonymity are those who are most likely to have played leading roles.

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<sup>144</sup> She was fined for brewing in the leet courts of 1397, 1406 and 1413 - RHA WCR. TNA DL29/310/4981 r.

<sup>145</sup> Amerced for bad commoning of his ewes - RHA WCR February 21, 1413.

<sup>146</sup> NRO FLT 1/116.

<sup>147</sup> RHA WCR February 19, 1397.

<sup>148</sup> NRO NRS 3353 13C5; HHA Wighton Deeds, Bundle 2, number 3.

## Beyond the parish: a wider affinity

The funding of, and influence upon, the reconstruction of Wighton's nave would not necessarily have been restricted to village residents. Many parish churches - including several with connections to Wighton - exhibit evidence of sponsorship from members of the Norfolk (and national) political, economic and social elite, through the display of their arms on the stone, timber or glass of many churches. There are antiquarian records of such heraldry at Wighton from several important East Anglian families: the Calthorpes and possibly the Pakenhams and de la Poles - all of Norfolk - and the Argenton family of Halesworth, Suffolk (see Chapter Two, p. 83). Meanwhile, the arms of Sir Thomas Erpingham appeared in the glass in Great Snoring and St Peter Hungate churches (p. 89 and p. 94), both of which have glazing which is related to that at Wighton. As far as we know, in none of these cases were the individuals or families resident in the respective villages.<sup>149</sup> There are also many testamentary records of bequests from rich individuals to several churches with which they had family, geographical or economic connections. Could some of the funding of the new nave at Wighton have come from such sources? There were certainly four extremely wealthy and influential men who did not live in the village, but who benefitted from, or controlled the manor and who must be considered as potential donors: Sir Robert Knolles, John de Wighton, and William and John Winter. These men were all part of a powerful Lancastrian affinity who had either fought with John of Gaunt - like Sir Robert - or had proven loyal to Henry Bolingbroke and then prospered under his kingship and that of his son Henry V. This affinity was established by Gaunt through patronage, with the aim of consolidating his power and influence throughout England and France. It was particularly strong in Norfolk and leading members included Sir Robert Knolles, Sir Thomas Erpingham, Sir Ralph Shelton and Sir William Calthorpe - whose funerary brass in Burnham Thorpe church depicts him wearing a Lancastrian livery collar and who, as we have seen, was a friend and business associate of both the Gigges and Gloys families in Wighton.<sup>150</sup>

The Calthorpes had paid for the rebuilding of Burnham Thorpe church - a conspicuous display of piety which was typical for this group of extremely wealthy men. First among them in this respect was Sir Thomas Erpingham. During his lifetime, he contributed to the refurbishment of the cathedral choir stalls, the glazing of a window, and he built the Erpingham gate - very probably overseen by the mason who built the Wighton chancel, James Woderove (see p. 38). He also paid for much of the building of the Norwich Blackfriars church, a large window at the Austin Friars, and the west tower of Erpingham church. His will of 1428 included bequests to Norwich hospitals, prisoners, recluses (Julian got 23s 4d), six nunneries and 40s each to both Erpingham and Litcham churches.<sup>151</sup> And, as already noted, he was memorialised in the stained

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<sup>149</sup> Byng is sceptical of the reliability of names and heraldry displayed in windows and on architectural features as indicators of sponsorship. He cites several examples of inscriptions where significant finance was not supplied by the gentry concerned (Byng 2014, 142-156).

<sup>150</sup> Walker 1990, 182-189.

<sup>151</sup> John 1998, 13-14.

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glass at St Peter Hungate and Great Snoring - a church rebuilt by Sir Ralph Shelton, the family friend and ally who died in 1414 (pp. 94-95).

Certainly, the effect that the individuals and institutions who controlled the manors had on the day-to-day life of the villagers, on the local economy and on religious commitment cannot be gauged in any detail. But Sir Robert Knolles, John de Wighton, and William and John Winter each had a principal residence in north Norfolk and had benefitted from the receipts of Wighton manor. So they were clearly influential figures in the local political and economic landscape in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century. They were men of substance, with connections at court, whose significant charitable giving and donations to major ecclesiastical renovation projects can either be proven or inferred. It is feasible that any one or more of these men may have contributed to the construction of the new nave at Wighton and in that light, it is instructive to disentangle some of their histories and their relationships with each other, with the Duchy and with the village.

In 1370, two years before the manor of Wighton was absorbed into the Duchy of Lancaster, it was part of a substantial grant to the military adventurer, Sir Robert Knolles (c. 1325 -1407) in consideration of his “good service ... in undertaking to continue the war against France”.<sup>152</sup> Knolles had amassed enormous wealth during the 100 Years War and had been acquiring manors in Norfolk since the 1360s, including Wighton. But his 1370 expedition to France was an ill-fated one and, two years later, he was blamed for its failure, stripped of the lands he had been granted and fined 10,000 marks.<sup>153</sup> Despite this setback, Knolles managed to retain much of his fortune. He eventually retired to Sculthorpe, eight miles from Wighton, where he died in 1407 aged about 92, having invested enormous sums in charitable and religious works, including the rebuilding of the tower, nave roof, north aisle and chancel of Sculthorpe church.<sup>154</sup> Apart from the grant of the manor, there is no direct evidence linking him to Wighton and its church, but given his piety, his association with the manor, and his date of death so close to the rebuilding of the nave, he may have felt moved to donate.

If Sir Robert might be considered a “possible”, John de Wighton (*fl.* 1373-1406) must surely be seen as a probable donor. Also known as John Leche, he took over from Knolles as lessee of the manors of Wighton and neighbouring Egmere in 1372. He sold his interests in both to William Winter in 1376 (below),<sup>155</sup> but retained some land in Wighton: his name appears in the court rolls from 1384-1406, often in joint ventures with William Gigges. His tenancies are significant ones - comprising both free and base tenure land. We don’t know acreages, but rather than comply with the requirement to attend the manorial court in 1396, he chose to pay a substantial amercement of 8s 6d connected with his tenancies (both free and base tenure) in Wighton manor, including

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<sup>152</sup> Writ to John de Rokewode, escheator of Norfolk - CMI 1937, entry 758.

<sup>153</sup> Sumption 2012, 92-93.

<sup>154</sup> ODNB 2009.

<sup>155</sup> Blomefield 1805-1810, vol. 8, 97.

one called Greyes<sup>156</sup> and another in Warham called Nugeonus. He still held these in 1405 when he paid amercements totalling 2s 3d.<sup>157</sup> In 1401-02 he held Veutres manor (see p. 148), along with Sir Robert Knolles, Sir William Calthorpe, Simon Veutre and the prior of Walsingham.<sup>158</sup> De Wighton was a merchant stapler (wool trader) and his connection with the Lancastrian affinity was apparently confirmed on October 5, 1399 - immediately after Henry IV's accession to power - when he was appointed as one of the two collectors of customs in Lynn.<sup>159</sup> This was a lucrative position which gave him joint responsibility for Crown import and export revenues from ports between Lynn and Blakeney and a stipend of £15 a year.<sup>160</sup> He also had business connections in London and, in 1406, he was referred to as the owner of a tenement in Le Checker street, Lynn.<sup>161</sup> Living in Lynn he could hardly have failed to notice the progress of the spectacular project to rebuild St Nicholas chapel - just a few hundred yards from his office at the Custom House. It is conceivable that he made contact with the three masons working on the new chapel who were later to cut the stones at Wighton - no doubt he occasionally came to the village to oversee his interests there. De Wighton probably died sometime between 1406 and 1412 - exactly the point when fundraising for the nave would have started. If John himself did not contribute, it is possible that George Wighton (*fl.* 1423-53), who was probably his son or grandson, did. Like John, George was a wool trader<sup>162</sup> and he had business links in London and Lynn and with the Gigges. Indeed he was one of a group of gentry enfeoffed of his father's former manor of Veutres by John Gigges in 1423.<sup>163</sup> He was living in Wighton in 1430,<sup>164</sup> where he probably held free land, very likely inherited from his father and, in a Court of Common Pleas case of 1450, he was described as a gentleman.<sup>165</sup>

The other highly influential family with strong links to Wighton was the Winters. In 1376 the manor was granted, or rented, to William Winter (bef. 1323-1397), the son of a husbandman, who had, by that time, become a wealthy and influential Norfolk lawyer with strong Lancastrian connections.<sup>166</sup> Winter also owned the manors at Town Barningham, East Beckham and Bodham, and was Sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk in both 1380 and 1392. He established his country home three miles from Wighton at Egmere, a property he was extending in the summer

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<sup>156</sup> Possibly connected with the Grey family of Merton (South of Swaffham) who held substantial lands in Norfolk (Blomefield 1805-1810, vol. 2, 300-304) and who also married into the Bedingfeld family in the fifteenth century.

<sup>157</sup> RHA WCR October 8, 1405.

<sup>158</sup> FA 1904, 652 and 637.

<sup>159</sup> TNA C 241/154/11 and CFR 1931, 4.

<sup>160</sup> CPR 1903, 132.

<sup>161</sup> CPR 1907, 269-70.

<sup>162</sup> C 241/228/160 - suit for debt of 100 marks against George Wighton before the mayor of the Staple of Westminster.

<sup>163</sup> Maxwell Lyte 1906, 4 (entry A. 10450). He was described as a gentleman in 1450 and 1453 (CP40/758 f92, CP40/768).

<sup>164</sup> TNA CP40/677 f340.

<sup>165</sup> CP40/758.

<sup>166</sup> Richmond 1990, 67.

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of 1396.<sup>167</sup> He died the following year and his will provided numerous bequests to local churches and monasteries, and provisions for chantries. It listed bequests of 2s each to more than 20 north Norfolk churches conditional on prayers being said for his soul and his wife's, including Egmere and six churches in several neighbouring villages which form a neat circle around it - Wighton, Great Walsingham, Little Walsingham, Waterden, South Creake and Holkham.<sup>168</sup>

Winter's eldest son, John (c. 1364-1414), also a lawyer, inherited Town Barningham manor, and properties in Barningham Northwood and Little Barningham. Very probably, he also inherited Wighton manor.<sup>169</sup> John benefitted enormously from Henry IV's seizure of the crown in 1399, significantly developing his family's political connections with the Lancastrian king to become one of his leading court officials.<sup>170</sup> He had already served as receiver of the Lancastrian estates in Norfolk from 1396 and was escheator in 1392 and 1397. In 1401, he was elected to Parliament and had repeated this success at least seven times before he died in 1414.<sup>171</sup> By 1403 he had become Henry IV's receiver general and controller of his household and, from 1408 until his death, he served as Steward of the Duchy in Norfolk.<sup>172</sup> With one brother in Egmere, another in East Beckham, and the third made rector of Town Barningham in 1407 (presented by Sir Thomas Erpingham, Sir Ralph Shelton, and Sir Robert Berney),<sup>173</sup> John Winter, whose seat was almost certainly also in Town Barningham, must surely have been at least an occasional visitor to Wighton. As controller of his household and with his connections to north Norfolk, it is probable that he accompanied Henry IV when he visited the shrine at Walsingham (2 miles from Egmere and Wighton) while making a "leisurely progress" through the county with Queen Joan and the 20-year-old Prince Henry in the summer of 1406.<sup>174</sup>

John Winter died on December 31, 1414 and the timing of his death would fit neatly with a donation to the renewal of a church in one of the manors which he seems to have inherited from his father. Unfortunately, his will does not survive. Could it have provided funds for a new All Saints, perhaps adding to a provision made by his father? Certainly John, who had no male descendants, moved in a political and social circles in which ostentatious piety was in

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<sup>167</sup> Richmond 1990, 70-71 which cites a writ *ad quod dampnum* in May 1396 which requested the re-routing of a road around his estate (TNA C143/426/1).

<sup>168</sup> The manuscript is damaged. It reads H---ham, but there is a geographical logic to the ordering of the churches, and it seems certain that Holkham is meant.

<sup>169</sup> Richmond 1990, 76.

<sup>170</sup> John had married Elizabeth Hethersett daughter of local landowner, William Hethersett - her sister's husband, John Payn, who was also a loyal Lancastrian retainer and who had been in Bolingbroke's household since at least 1390, went into exile with him in 1398 and returned with him the following year. He had been escheator of Norfolk twice before this date, commissioner of the peace in 1397 and was Steward of the Duchy of Cornwall by 1399. See Richmond 1990, 71-72. In 1401 he and John Winter were both returned to Parliament as the two candidates for Norfolk - HOP 1993.

<sup>171</sup> HOP 1993.

<sup>172</sup> Castor 2000, 62.

<sup>173</sup> Blomefield 1805-1810, vol. 8, 100.

<sup>174</sup> Bennett 2008, 21. He may also have accompanied Bolingbroke when he visited Walsingham in June 1398, just before Henry's exile (Given-Wilson 2016, 113).

vogue.<sup>175</sup> As we have seen, the Lancastrian affinity of which he was a part were all notable for their contributions to charitable works and church building - Sir Ralph Shelton in particular, who along with his wife, probably rebuilt Great Snoring church (pp. 93-95), had died only two months before him. Even John Winter's brother-in-law and fellow MP, John Reymes, who had nothing like the resources of an Erpingham, Shelton or Knolles, was instrumental in the rebuilding of his local church at Overstrand, where he was to be buried (the previous church was damaged by land-slip).<sup>176</sup>

This doesn't prove, of course, that John Winter was religiously inclined, nor that he made any significant bequests to church building. Perhaps, as some sons do, he thought differently from his father. But there is a question mark over what happened to the Winter fortune. Edmund, John's brother and William's last surviving son, died in 1448 with but a single manor to his name.<sup>177</sup> Colin Richmond quotes Trevor John suggesting - in an unpublished thesis - that "gifts to religious houses" by John Winter had "somewhat reduced the Winter inheritance". Richmond is highly sceptical of such a scenario. He concedes that the alienation of Egmore to Walsingham Abbey in 1425, "may have been the result of a pious bequest by John Winter" but argues that there is no evidence that John was a religious man, and suggests instead that the opposite may be the case, finding some evidence of his failure to respect his father's pious intentions in John's administration of William's will.<sup>178</sup> Richmond puts the blame on William Winter's own religious benefactions and, to some extent, on the generosity he showed his younger sons which diluted the family inheritance.<sup>179</sup>

Yet Richmond's arguments hardly clinch the matter and often seem contradictory. As he himself points out, we know that John Winter had plenty of assets during the 15 years before his death. As well as Wighton manor, he had inherited Town Barningham and possibly Bodham manors and properties in Barningham Northwood and Little Barningham from his father and he had obtained a life interest in Loundhall manor in Saxthorpe. He also had the estates of his heiress wives - first the Hethersett inheritance and then substantial lands in Cambridge, Cambridgeshire and Essex, through his second wife Eleanor (who died only just over a year after him in March 1416).<sup>180</sup> What is more, he enjoyed an income from his posts in the Lancastrian government - his retainer as receiver general of the king's estates alone was £50 a year.<sup>181</sup> So clearly, whatever happened to the family estates after his death in December 1414 John Winter was a man of

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<sup>175</sup> Richmond 1990, 107. Elizabeth died unmarried, Winter's brother Edmund survived until 1448.

<sup>176</sup> HOP 1993. He also donated half an acre of land to the church through a royal licence which he had procured in 1399.

<sup>177</sup> Even though he had been John Winter's heir, his brother Edmund died possessed of only one estate (Town Barningham) and a house at Coslany, Norwich - Richmond 1990, 84. His will of 1448 is in NRO NCC Wylbey 150.

<sup>178</sup> Richmond 1990, 85 - although Richmond's highly-involved argument on this point (pp. 80-82) is fraught with uncertainties, and eventually suggests (p. 82) that "probably" John Winter had indeed intended to fulfil his father's will.

<sup>179</sup> Richmond 1990, 77 and 86.

<sup>180</sup> HOP 1993.

<sup>181</sup> HOP 1993.

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substance and standing. He was also part of a local (and national) social elite, many of whom were extremely prominent benefactors to the Church. That a man with no direct heirs might make no such provisions, could be seen as unusual, if not unlikely. And, especially since his death came in the middle of the rebuilding work, he must thus be considered a strong candidate for a significant donation to the new nave at Wighton.

## **The tower and porch: 1480-1515**

It is both much easier and much harder to assess who was responsible for organising the final phase of building work at All Saints between 1480 and 1515. The easy part is the testamentary evidence which, as we have already seen in Chapter One (p. 19), confirms the dates and the nature of the investments in the porch, tower and bell which were undertaken at the end of the fifteenth century, as well as 14 names of those who made bequests of 3s 6d or more, or who specified a particular part of the fabric. For the sake of convenience, Table 2, which summarises those bequests, is reproduced again here (right). But apart from these wills, far fewer village, parish and manorial documents survive from this period than from 1380-1430, so it is not possible to characterise the population in much detail. As demonstrated in Chapter Three, we do know that the economic structures of the village had altered significantly since the first quarter of the century. The nature of sheep farming in particular was changing fast and was now dominated by fewer, more economically powerful individuals. One rare document which does help us is the record of individual assessments for contributions to Edward IV's war effort of c. 1481 (see pp. 127-128). In Wighton, four men contributed a total of just over £4. They must therefore stand among the wealthiest in the village and their names confirm that at least some of the families from the social and economic elite of the 1410s had retained their status.

William Gloys (*fl.* 1455-86) gave a particularly high contribution of 26s 8d. We know little more about him, except that he was probably a grandson or great grandson of John Gloys (pp. 149-150) and, in 1455 and 1477, he is described as a yeoman in the Court of Common Pleas.<sup>182</sup> His son, John Gloys, died young in 1486 - when he was probably in his late 20s or early 30s - and his will confirms the family's extensive resources.<sup>183</sup> It included a substantial 20s legacy to All Saints and referred to (unspecified) lands in Wighton which his father William was expecting to bequeath him. There were also references to his own property and land in Wells, land which he had bought in Wighton, and sufficient cash to allow for two £20 legacies to his children.

Robert Gigges III (*fl.* 1474-d. 1506), who was also assessed at 26s 8d was the great grandson of William Gigges (see Appendix Two). His will (1506) requests burial in the north aisle of Wighton church and leaves 20s to the church fabric.<sup>184</sup> And Simon Grys, who was assessed at 13s 4d, is presumably a descendant or relative of John Grys who was lynched in 1423 (see p.

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<sup>182</sup> TNA CP40/776 and CP40/861.

<sup>183</sup> NRO ANW Fuller alias Roper 143.

<sup>184</sup> NRO NCC Ryxe 348 (see also p. 149).

**Table 2: Specific and significant bequests to the fabric of Wighton church before 1515**

Date of probate	Villager	Sum bequeathed	Conditions attached
1483	Robert King	40s	reparation of the church
1484	Sir Edmund Wyghton	3s 4d	use of church works
1486	John Gloys	20s	reparation of the church
1489	Robert Creke	33s 4d	reparation of the bell
1491	Alan Wyllyamsone	40s	building new pinnacles of the tower
1491	Thomas Tyrle	6s 8d	reparation of new pinnacles of the tower
1491	Alan Dobido	1 quarter of malt (approx 4s)	for the new bell
1493	Cecilia Dobido (?wife of Alan)	3s 4d	reparation of the church
1494	Helena Creke (wife of Robert)	20s	reparation of the church
1494	Robert Fysher	13s 4d and 6s 8d	first sum to building tower, second to building south porch
1496	William Feke	8 marks (£5 6s 4d)	repair of the church or the tower
1497	William Ringstead	6s 8d and 10s	building porch and to be buried in the porch; the 10s is for maintenance ( <i>sustent</i> )
1498	Margaret Hill	10s	maintenance ( <i>sustent</i> ) of the church
1514	Robert Whelpe	12d	to middle bell

156). The fourth prominent family from the early part of the century still to be flourishing is the Fykes - assuming that the William Feke is a variant spelling of Fykes. William left substantial assets, including £5 6s 4d to church reparations, in his will of 1496. The rest of the will includes a messuage and 20 acres of land, and unspecified amounts of land in Wighton, Walsingham and Hindringham, as well as cattle and four horses - clearly a substantial estate.<sup>185</sup> However, the c. 1481 tax assessment, which lists his name, does not record a figure against it. Another man, William King, may have contributed a further 13s 4d (the manuscript is unclear), while the name John Dobbys has been crossed out. Finally, Robert Creke, a husbandman,<sup>186</sup> was assessed at 13s 4d. He was to leave 33s 4d for reparation of the church bell on his death a few years later, while his wife Helena left 20s. Finally, Sir Edmund Wyghton (d. 1484) was an active London attorney from at least 1445-70 and may also have been a son or grandson of John de Wighton and George Wighton (see above).<sup>187</sup> He was buried in London, but left 3s 4d to Wighton church, and his estate included free land in Wighton, East Barsham and Sculthorpe.<sup>188</sup>

<sup>185</sup> NRO ANW Fuller alias Roper 292.

<sup>186</sup> TNA CP40/907.

<sup>187</sup> TNA CP 40/745, 432d, where Wyghton is listed as defence attorney in 1447.

<sup>188</sup> His will (TNA PROB 11/7/133) is dated 1484 and, though he lived in London, includes a bequest of 3s 4d to All Saints Wighton. It also refers to lands he owns in Sculthorpe, East Barsham and Wighton, which are to be sold to fund the singing of masses for his and his family's souls in the churches at Wighton and Sculthorpe.

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## Conclusions

The evidence suggested by the fabric and the varied window designs of All Saints; by similar parish building campaigns such as that at Swaffham; and by wider analysis of the distribution of wealth among the peasantry, all suggest that the new nave of All Saints, Wighton must have been paid for in large part by a relatively small coterie of the wealthiest parishioners. Like the sponsors of the vast majority of Norfolk's medieval churches, they were men and women whose identities have long been lost. But while the collection of surviving documentary evidence from Wighton in the long fifteenth century is an imperfect one, by casting a net as widely as possible across all kinds of archival survivals it has proved possible to recover enough evidence to reconstruct with confidence the names, status, activities and assets of the two dozen or so leading residents of Wighton at the time of the nave reconstruction - the men from whose ranks, the majority of the sponsors must have been drawn in the crucial years around 1410. Judging from their assets and business dealings, nearly all were in a position to make substantial donations towards the new church. They were men for whom the sum of, say, £5 over a five year period - or the equivalent in materials or goods - was an affordable amount to invest in a project which not only enhanced or confirmed their status within the village and the wider community but also, they must surely have calculated, would shorten their time in purgatory. Several were in a position to contribute substantially more than this: certainly William Gigges and John de Wighton, very probably John Gloys and John atte Mille, and possibly Edmund atte Fenn, Thomas Coo, John Grys, and perhaps one or two other free men, traces of whom have been lost. Other, more speculative candidates who must be considered potential sponsors are the immensely wealthy and pious men who held the manor in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century: Sir Robert Knolles, William Winter, and his son John Winter who died at the end of 1414 when a bequest to the fabric would have been particularly helpful for the rebuilding campaign.

Perhaps even more significantly, five of those most prominent potential donors died just before this date - a key moment when testamentary donations might have kick-started the project. Each was the head of a prominent family either living in, or originating from the village: John de Wighton, John atte Mille senior and John Gloys senior - just mentioned - and two others, Martin de Stowe and Ralph Toke. All these men appear to have died between 1405 and 1412 and of the five, all but John de Wighton are also known donors of expensive books, vestments and silverware to All Saints. None of their wills survive, but each of them must be a strong candidate for a significant bequest to the new church.

The court and account rolls also reveal that, at the time work started on the new nave, Wighton possessed a core group of wealthy, or modestly wealthy men who had many years' experience in manorial office. Since the 1390s, many key manorial positions - such as juror, affeerer and collector - had been occupied year upon year by the same men who had thus acquired responsibility and standing within the community and who possessed the requisite experience and business acumen for a project of this kind. Most notable among them were William Gigges

himself, Denis Wylles, Stephen Burgeys, William Golding, and John de Flitcham. Like atte Mille, de Stowe, Gloys and Toke, they had been born in the years either side of 1360 to a generation who had survived the Black Death and they had in their turn survived the later plagues at the end of the fourteenth century. They had witnessed the social upheavals of 1381 in their youth and come of age in a world much altered from that of their parents and grandparents, an age of radical economic and social change, a time when energy, imagination and entrepreneurship could reap financial dividends.

These men also lived an era of generous patronage towards parish churches. Indeed, this was a generation who had grown up surrounded by some of the most lavish acts of religious sponsorship in Norfolk. Two miles to the south, in Little Walsingham, two of the biggest building projects in the region had been underway - the construction from scratch of the Franciscan friary, and the rebuilding of the enormous nave at the Augustinian priory. Less than five miles to the west the churches at Burnham Thorpe and South Creake had been largely and impressively rebuilt by 1410. And, were they to have travelled to Lynn or Norwich around this time - which they surely did - they would have witnessed the progress of other spectacular building projects such as the great chapel at St Nicholas, Lynn and the ambitious new Norwich guildhall. En route to Norwich they may also have passed by the vast new churches at Salle and Cawston. By the same date, the men of this entrepreneurial Wighton generation were entering their 50s. They must have been deeply impressed by the building work they had seen. They must surely also have begun to sense their own mortality and grown more concerned for the health of their souls. The extent of individual contributions can never be known. But the surviving evidence of their assets and business and farming activities, confirm that funding a building campaign costing about £300 would be easily within their collective means. With the support of a well-established and wealthy vicar and probably spurred on by legacies from several wealthy villagers who had died during the preceding five years, they decided, towards the end of their own lives, to initiate and oversee the reconstruction of a new parish church. After centuries of anonymity, we now know their names.



# *Conclusions*

This thesis has attempted to break new ground in the study of Norfolk's medieval parish churches in five key ways. The first, as set out in the introduction, is the overall approach which has focused in depth on a single, apparently unremarkable church and its village. Detailed studies of individual parish churches are extremely rare and, where they do exist, they invariably focus on the grandest and the most distinctive examples. All Saints Wighton, by contrast is a "one-star" rather than a "three-star" church - impressively large, but not of special or individual architectural note. Nonetheless it is a fine example of its type and it is a type which is of great significance to the architectural landscape of medieval Norfolk - there are perhaps a dozen churches of a similar size in the immediate vicinity and scores more which were aggrandised in the first half of the fifteenth century. Along with similar reconstruction programmes across the country, they constitute the greatest and most sustained campaign of church building in English history. Yet very little is known about the individuals who might have built them, the communities that raised the funds and how these reconstructions relate to each other and to other ecclesiastical building works, such as the monasteries of rural Norfolk and - in this case - Lincolnshire. This study has aimed - in the case of Wighton at least - to set that right.

The second area of new ground is the way in which the thesis addresses one of the main obstacles to understanding those social and architectural connections, namely the difficulty of accurately dating individual churches. We can assign a style and so suggest an era, but in most cases no documentation or other evidence survives that would make it possible to date within four or five decades when a particular church was built or adapted. The comparative analysis of masons' marks as a technique for dating building work developed in this thesis is therefore of great potential significance. It is a method which must be applied with care and circumspection, but it is an extremely valuable addition to a researcher's armoury. Though marks are not found in all churches, they are relatively common on fifteenth-century nave arcades, and the more

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marks which are recorded and tabulated, the more useful they will become. Some new examples have been identified, though not yet published, by the survey of Norfolk church graffiti currently underway. But many more will have been missed because the survey concentrates on graffiti at head height or below and masons' marks are most commonly found high up on the voussoirs of the arcade arches, visible only through binoculars. Further work on these may well prove of enormous value in dating and sequencing other local churches. As part of this research I have already documented a rich collection of distinctive marks on the piers and arcade arches at Salle and South Creake, and in the tower of St Peter Mancroft, Norwich, none of which are found at Wighton or the other churches studied here. It is credible to suppose that the masons who worked on these prestigious projects were also recruited to work on others nearby which might be more precisely-dated as a result.

Thirdly, on a level more specific to each church, analysing the distribution of marks to identify how teams of masons worked together is not a new methodology *per se* - Jenny Alexander has used it in her work on Beverley Minster.<sup>1</sup> But counting voussoirs and measuring spans to determine the order of building of the arcade arches, as employed in this study of Wighton, is an innovative approach which further enriches the information which can be gleaned from the marks. More work may be needed on the potential reasons behind the pattern of variations identified and its significance, but that work will certainly improve understanding of the fabric of individual buildings, including the timescale and order of works.

The fourth area in which this research project has sought to break new ground and one which also stems from close examination of the fabric, is the significance attributed to the detail of the stonework. Matching designs and the use of the same templates for window traceries, the profiles of piers and of door openings, have all been registered before and have been used to attempt to identify the work of individual masons.<sup>2</sup> But this thesis has proposed that differences in tracery patterns and the profiles of the rear arches of the windows - a design detail which doesn't appear to have been considered before - can also be interpreted as evidence of the type of patronage involved and are likely to be indicative of the number of significant donors to the nave project. Such evidence is inevitably suggestive rather than conclusive, but it is strengthened significantly when combined with a better understanding of the parish society involved in this project.

And it is this type of social enquiry that comprises the fifth area of novelty to which this thesis aspires. It has sought to combine architectural assessments with the extant documentary evidence for Wighton and so reconstruct the society - and economy - at the time of the major phases of rebuilding. While ecclesiastical historians have tended to focus on the religious beliefs and practices which motivated parishioners to rebuild their churches, this study has instead sought to establish which residents might have funded and led the work and how they might have made their money. While we cannot know exactly who did what, the resulting documentary analysis has revealed a

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander 2008.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Fawcett 1980.

wealthy, entrepreneurial society dominated by an elite of perhaps half a dozen men and a coterie of about 20 other key individuals. It thus confirmed the likely pattern of patronage suggested by the analysis of the fabric. Furthermore, these documentary sources have indicated that the crucial moment when the new nave was planned and built was an economically propitious one and it was also a time when this core group of parishioners had been leading the community for more than 20 years. They had the necessary experience, trust and wealth to fund, organise and deliver such a major communal project.

In summary, while this thesis has suggested new research techniques, its fundamental approach has been cross-disciplinary, marrying the methodologies of an architectural historian and archaeologist with those of an archival researcher to produce not only a close reading of the fabric of a single building, but also the social, economic and architectural context in which it was reconstructed. To what extent could such an approach be of value in the study of other churches and communities? It is certainly one which could be widely applied. This work on Wighton has demonstrated that - even where evidence might, at first sight, appear to be lacking - a detailed and informative picture can, nevertheless, emerge when all the available pieces of the multi-disciplinary jigsaw are placed together. It is true that All Saints and its parish have some particular advantages as a case study - the masons' marks and the surviving accounts from the cellarer's rolls which relate to the new chancel are unusual. But there have also been significant disadvantages to overcome: no churchwardens' accounts, no building accounts, few wills and merely a patchy set of manorial court rolls and accounts have survived. Furthermore, the fabric of Wighton church is much disrupted and denuded - the tower was rebuilt only 40 years ago, the roof replaced in 1826, the walls were largely re-plastered by the Victorians, the screen is in fragments, there are no surviving wall paintings and no inscriptions, early brasses or medieval family heraldry. What this research project has demonstrated is that by painstaking observation and precise measurement of the fabric, by casting the evidentiary net wide and by being creative, many of these disadvantages can be mitigated. Fragments of evidence have been stitched together from court and account rolls and from a trawl of an extremely broad range of historical sources and these have confirmed dates, suggested links, or otherwise added to the picture. This approach is becoming ever more manageable as archives are catalogued and digitised and more and more previously isolated material is uploaded onto the internet. Many other parishes are likely to be better documented and the fabric of their churches is likely to offer just as much evidence, if not more.

The relevance of this study also goes beyond developing new methodologies to construct a portrait of an individual church. Producing such a portrait inevitably informs our understanding of the wider field - in this case not just geographically, but thematically. It has established that a series of churches in rural northwest Norfolk were built by masons who worked on St Nicholas, King's Lynn between 1400 and 1410, as well as at Crowland Abbey. More links would not only confirm or further refine dates, but also spheres of stylistic influence. As Appendix One and

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the review of church dates on pp. 87-96 illustrate, understanding what might be learned from the masons' marks and the stained glass has also required close attention both to the fabric and documentation of at least 16 other churches. In several cases this has led to significant revision of the dates of both the buildings and the stained glass. Indeed the research has borne out what has become an academic truism over the last decade or two - that style is a treacherous guide to date. Witness to this is the similarity between the design of the piers at Wighton with those of Great Walsingham - which can be dated with reasonable security to no later than the 1340s - and which tempted at least one architectural historian to assume that both arcades are of similar date.<sup>3</sup> This research has demonstrated that they are not. The designs are similar and no doubt the Great Walsingham version was used as a model for the work at Wighton, but not until 70 years or more later. Similarly, it has been the contention of Chapter Two that using style to date stained glass is highly unreliable if the evidence of the fabric and documentation of the building are not also taken into account.

Finally, though not explored in detail in this thesis, the material uncovered about those influential patrons whose names have appeared throughout the text - the Sheltons, the Calthorpes, the Winters, Sir Thomas Erpingham, Sir Robert Knolles and others - may prove of significance in further studies. These are men and families whose piety is already to some extent documented, but the connections between whom and the details of whose patronage have yet to be established.

So while the preceding chapters have set out a detailed picture of just one fifteenth-century Norfolk church and its parishioners, they have also articulated discoveries whose implications will reach well beyond the narrow parameters of a single parish. These wider implications represent - hopefully - the most significant fruits of this research project. Masons' marks mean relatively little until connected with other examples in other churches. Decoding the origins, the date and the imagery of stained glass requires close comparison with examples elsewhere. Models of patronage and funding arrangements for building work can only be understood in relation to those employed by other communities or individuals. The more that network of interconnectivity is developed, the greater the precision that can be established over when, by whom and in what circumstances Norfolk's churches were rebuilt in the fifteenth century.

*FINIS*

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<sup>3</sup> Haward 1995.



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## *Abbreviations*

BL	British Library
CAD	Catalogue of Ancient Deeds
CCR	Calendar of the Close Rolls
CFR	Calendar of the Fine Rolls
CIM	Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous
CIPM	Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem
CPMR	Calendar of the plea and memoranda rolls of the City of London
CPR	Calendar of the Patent Rolls
CVMA	<i>Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi</i> of Great Britain
FA	Feudal Aids
HHA	Holkham Hall Archives, Norfolk
HOP	History of Parliament
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
LPA	Lambeth Palace Archives
MG	Medieval Genealogy
MMC	Mapping the Medieval Countryside
NHER	Norfolk Heritage Explorer
NRO	Norfolk Record Office
ODNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
RHA	Raynham Hall Archives, Norfolk
TNA	The National Archives

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NRO DCN 1/2/60 (1451-52).

NRO DCN 1/2/61A/61B (1455-56).

NRO DCN 1/2/62 (1456-57).

NRO DCN 1/2/63 (1457-58).

NRO DCN 1/2/64 (1458-59).

NRO DCN 1/2/65 (1464-65).

NRO DCN 1/2/66 (1465-66).

NRO DCN 1/2/67 (1468-69).

NRO DCN 1/2/68 (1469-70).

NRO DCN 1/2/69 (1470-71).

NRO DCN 1/2/70 (1471-72).

NRO DCN 1/2/71 (1474-75).

NRO DCN 1/2/72 (1475-76).

NRO DCN 1/2/73 (1476-77).

NRO DCN 1/2/74 (1478-79).

## Grants, deeds and land transactions

NRO FLT 1/116 *Charter of lands in Flitcham, 1406.*

TNA C 143/443/8 *Release of free land, 1411-12.*

RHA R27, Raynham, Hen IV-Hen VI and RHA R32, Deeds Raynham, 1401-1419 *Grants by Roger Townshend of land to his son and daughter-in-law on January 25 and January 26, 1417.*

TNA WARD 2/51/177/27, /83 and TNA WARD 2/52A/178/64, /68, /69, /85, /86, /143 *Grants in the Court of Wards and Liveries, 1418-1466.*

TNA E 42/138 *Grant of the manor of Veutres, 1422-1423.*

TNA E 42/340 *Grant of the manor of Veutres, 1423.*

HHA Wighton Deeds, Bundle 2, number 3 *Admissions register to base tenure land in Wighton manor, 1423-1459 (Henry VI).*

RHA RL 27 (2), RL 9/B, RL 29, RL 11/B *Townshend family land transactions, 1432-1449.*

HHA HD 194 *Deed citing William Gloys as messor of Wighton manor, 1439.*

HHA Wighton Deeds, Bundle II, no.4 *Reference to James Feake as weaver and walet-maker, 1441.*

BL Add. Ch. 76271-26272 *Grants of land in Wighton, 1465, 1473.*

NRO MC 2589/1, 917X4 *Deed related to former property of John Bokenham, 1469.*

TNA CP 25/1/170/196 f 45 *Thomas Gigges and Thomas Curzon paid £200 for the “rights” to the manors of Hedenham, Kelling and Raynham, 1495.*

HHA Davidson, Holkham 120 *Rental, partly mis-dated by the archive as 1456-57. The entries referred to here are dated 14 Henry VIII (1522-23).*

TNA DL43/7/29B *Fieldbook of Methwold manor, Norfolk, 1574-75.*

## Legal disputes

TNA C 241/192/45 *Chancery: Certificates of Statute Merchant and Statute Staple, suit for debt, 1402.*

TNA C 241/203/4 *Chancery: Certificates of Statute Merchant and Statute Staple, suit for debt, 1411.*

TNA C 241/210/10 *Chancery: Certificates of Statute Merchant and Statute Staple, suit for debt, 1417.*

TNA C 1/71/93 *Court of Chancery dispute over a wreck, undated but must dated between 1415-1458.*

TNA C 241/228/160 *Suit for debt of 100 marks against George Wighton before the mayor of the Staple of Westminster.*

## Court of Common Pleas

Digitisation of the Court of Common Pleas record is in progress at the University of Houston. Selected years are indexed and available online: [http://aalt.law.uh.edu/Indices/CP40Indices/CP40\\_Indices.html](http://aalt.law.uh.edu/Indices/CP40Indices/CP40_Indices.html)

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TNA CP40/677 *George Wighton living in Wighton in 1430, Thomas Coo described as a yeoman in 1432.*

TNA CP40/629 *John Grys and Edmund atte Fen described as husbandmen in 1432.*

TNA CP 40/745 *Sir Edmund Wyghton listed as defence attorney in 1447.*

TNA CP40/758 *George Wighton described as a gentleman and John Gigges as a draper in 1450.*

TNA CP40/768 *John Gigges and George Wighton described as gentleman in 1453.*

TNA CP40/776 and CP40/861 *William Gloyes described as a yeoman in 1455 and 1477.*

TNA CP40/807 *Robert Gigges described as a yeoman in 1463.*

TNA CP40/826 *Reference to executors of John Gigges in 1468.*

TNA CP40/895 *John Gigges described as a gentleman and a merchant (he is being sued by a draper) in 1486.*

TNA CP40/907 *Robert Creke described as a Husbandman 1489.*

### **Wills and probate**

LMA Court of Husting, MF Roll 120 (entry 73) *Nicholas Brandon, 1392.*

NRO HARE 5980, 227X3 *John Fincham, 1411.*

LPA Register Chicheley II 172 *Margaret Howard, 1416.*

NRO NCC Hirning 40 *William Lene, 1417.*

NRO NCC Surflete 102 *Thomas Gloyes, 1432.*

NRO NCC Doke 3 *Thomas Burgeys, 1437 (administration grant).*

NRO NCC Doke 21 *John Beyhom, 1437.*

NRO NCC Wylbey 41 *John Ade Senior, 1444.*

NRO NCC Aleyn 7 *James Woderove, 1451.*

NRO NCC Aleyn 77 *John Dapelyn, 1451.*

NRO, NCC Wight 2 *Nicholas Ingham, 1451.*

NRO NCC Brosyard 109 *Robert Dokking, 1458.*

NRO NCC Brosyard 94 *Robert Kewe, alias Bradenham, 1458.*

NRO NCC Gelour, 12 *Thomas Molle, 1473.*

NRO NCC Paynot 88 *Margaret Gigges, 1483.*

TNA PROB 11/7/133 *Sir Edmund Wyghton, 1484.*

NRO ANW Fuller alias Roper 76 *Robert King, 1483.*

NRO ANW Fuller alias Roper 143 *John Gloyes, 1486.*

NRO ANW Fuller alias Roper 160 *Robert Creke, 1489.*

NRO ANW Fuller alias Roper 185 *Thomas Tyrle, 1491.*

NRO ANW Fuller alias Roper 192 *Alan Dobydo, 1491.*

NRO NCC Woolman 126 *Alan Wyllyamsone, 1491.*

NRO ANW Fuller alias Roper 227 *Cecilia Dobido, 1493.*

NRO ANW Fuller alias Roper 229 *Helena Creke, 1494.*

NRO ANW Fuller alias Roper 248 *Robert Fysher, 1494.*

NRO ANW Fuller alias Roper 292 *William Feke, 1496.*

NRO NCC Multon 8 *John Gigges, 1496.*

NRO ANW Fuller alias Roper 294 *William Ringstead, 1497.*

NRO ANW Fuller alias Roper 282 *Margaret Hill, 1498.*

TNA C 1/1490/4-6 *Court of Chancery dispute over the will of William Feke, 1500.*

NRO NCC Ryxe 289 *Thomas Gigges, 1505.*

NRO NCC Ryxe 348 *Robert Gigges, 1506.*

NRO ANW Gloys, 118 *Robert Whelpe 1514.*

### **Miscellaneous**

TNA C 139/54/22 mm.1–2 Inquisition into a writ of Mandamus, Lynn, 1432. Available online at <http://www.inquisitionsdead.ac.uk/view/inquisition/23-637> [accessed April 22, 2015].

TNA C 139/52/66 mm.2–3 - 592 *Writ de etate probanda, February 3, 1431. Proof of age, William son of John Calthorpe, knight.* Available online at <http://www.inquisitionsdead.ac.uk/view/inquisition/23-591/592> [accessed April 22, 2015].

HHA E/M/160 *A map of the lands of Christopher Bedingfeld Esq in his manor of Wighton. By John Halsey. Surveyed in or before 1720 and drawn 1723.*

HHA E/G4, 54 *Plans of parishes on Holkham estate, 1828.*

BL Add. Ms. 23061 *Additional Drawings, Engravings, etc., Illustrating Blomefield's History of Norfolk, collected by Dawson Turner, 1846-1857.*

NRO DN FCB/9/7 *Faculty for renewal of the roof of Wighton church in 1826.*

NRO DN FCB/10 *Faculty for restoration of Wighton church in 1897.*

NRO MC630/39 *Notes by Norwich mason, R. H. Flood (nineteenth-twentieth century).*

NRO PD 582/56 *Papers relating to rebuilding of St. Mary's church Walsingham after fire in 1961 (1961-1971).*

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# *Appendix One*

## *Evidence for dating churches with shared masons' marks*

Dates below refer to the part or parts of the building where the masons' marks are found, not necessarily for the entire structure. All are in Norfolk unless stated otherwise. There is no known documentary or antiquarian evidence to help date Emneth church.

### **St Nicholas, Lynn: c. 1400-10**

It is safe to assume that construction of this hugely ambitious chapel of 11 bays must have taken several years. Building work may have begun around 1400 - since John Wace (Mayor of Lynn, 1396-97) bequeathed £30 along with a further £20 from the residue of his estate, if any, towards the fabric of the chapel in 1399.<sup>1</sup> Fawcett cited records of town council meetings which mention demolition work in 1413, though this could refer to the remains of the old building which may have been outside the new structure.<sup>2</sup> Blomefield records that a date of 1413 was formerly in the window next to the north door.<sup>3</sup> Certainly the chapel must have been finished before 1419 when it was described as newly built (*de novo edificata*) - the masonry for the arcades, where the relevant marks are found, must have been cut several years before this.<sup>4</sup>

### **Litcham: c. 1408-12**

The consecration of the new church is recorded on St Botolph's day of 1412,<sup>5</sup> suggesting that, if not finished, substantial progress had been made on the building and the new roof was likely to be on. It must have taken at least four years to construct.

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<sup>1</sup> Woodger 1993.

<sup>2</sup> Fawcett 1975, 231.

<sup>3</sup> Blomefield 1805-1810, vol. 8, 512.

<sup>4</sup> Beloe 1899, 83 and 149-50.

<sup>5</sup> Cozens-Hardy 1952, 339.

## East Winch: c. 1416

Legacies were made in 1388 (20s - to the work of the church) and, more significantly, in 1416 (£10 to building the church).<sup>6</sup> The latter bequest was from Margaret Howard who was buried on the north side of the chancel alongside her husband Sir Robert, lord of Grancourt's manor (d. 1388).<sup>7</sup> It is a substantial amount, suggesting reconstruction work was in progress or anticipated by this donation.

## Crowland Abbey (Lincolnshire): 1417-27

Pevsner dates the tower to c. 1460-69, while Harvey considers it much earlier, with an attribution to the mason William of Croyland (fl. 1392-1427).<sup>8</sup> However, neither authorities cite any primary evidence. The only documentary source proves a more nuanced chronology, *The Second Continuation of Ingulph's Chronicle of the Abbey of Croyland*, which covers the years 1388-1470 and was written by the then prior of the abbey.<sup>9</sup> He states that William of Croyland was appointed master of the works, under Thomas Overton (Abbot 1392-1417) and built the western part of the cloisters, the north and south "transverse aisles" of the nave below the choir, including their vaulted roofs and glass windows and the chapel to the Virgin on the north side. His successor, Richard Upton (Abbot 1417-27) made extensive benefactions to the Abbey and oversaw extensive building work "the new works of the lower parts of the church towards the west." These works, including the aisle, "were built from the foundations by brother William of Croyland, master of the works." As well as receiving money from the Abbot and the "profit and produce of the convent" - both annually - William is also credited with procuring specific contributions totalling more than £250 from other named lay and clerical benefactors to pay for this work.<sup>10</sup> The next Abbot, the long-lived John Litlington (Abbot 1427-70), was responsible for "erecting many buildings in the court of the abbey," building and gilding the ceiling in the lower church,<sup>11</sup> the "glazing of all the windows and the arches of stone [presumably roof vaults] in the aisles on either side" of the church. Given that the tower is continuous with the aisle, forming its western end, and that it was under Upton that the aisles were started and Litlington that the aisles are roofed, the sequence described in Kelly's nineteenth-century topographical guide is surely correct. Therefore work on the tower must have begun under Upton but, unfinished at his death in 1427, completed under Litlington in 1464.<sup>12</sup> This chronology fits both the contemporary description of the prior and the evidence of the masons' marks which are located in the lower parts of the tower.

<sup>6</sup> Cattermole and Cotton 1983, 274 and LPA Register Chicheley II 172.

<sup>7</sup> Blomefield 1805-1810, vol. 9, 149.

<sup>8</sup> Pevsner 1989, 239 and Harvey 1984, 76.

<sup>9</sup> Riley 1908, vi-vii. The prior was certainly alive during the 1460s and earlier – he writes of "matters which have taken place in our own time" (p. 450).

<sup>10</sup> Riley 1908, 392-393 and 360.

<sup>11</sup> Riley 1908, 449.

<sup>12</sup> Kelly 1896.

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## **Walpole St Peter: c. 1423**

Blomefield noted that the dates 1423 and 1425 were formerly inscribed in chancel windows.<sup>13</sup> The masons' marks are in the lower parts of the (very high) chancel - on the blind arcades and seats - suggesting the masons were working at least two or three years before this.

## **Little Walsingham: 1420s (?)**

There was a legacy for the emendation of the porch (1458) and to new “eles” and chapels (1506 onwards),<sup>14</sup> but this must refer to the side chapels - the main body of church must have been built earlier. Davis estimated 1425, and though this is based on the masons' marks alone, it is also consistent with the style of the stained glass (see pp. 79-81).<sup>15</sup>

## **Fincham St Martin: 1420s-30s**

A £10 bequest was made to the church by John Fincham in 1411, but the will was not proven, and he didn't die until 1415 when he left another will which makes no reference or donation to the fabric of the church, but does request burial there.<sup>16</sup> Heslop notes similarities in design with St Nicholas, Mildenhall (complete by 1435) and Weasenham, and cites the stylistic dating of painted glass in the chancel to about 1430.<sup>17</sup> Legacies to the “fabric of the belfry” were made in 1458 (£7 6s 8d payable over seven years) and in 1476, but these were probably to finish the tower which had most likely been completed to sufficient height to seal the nave at an earlier date.

## **Weasenham St Peter: 1430s**

Money was left by John Beyhom in 1437 to make two glass windows, suggesting new tracery was complete and the roof was on.<sup>18</sup> In 1473, Thomas Molle left 100s for a new bell.<sup>19</sup>

## **St Margaret's, Lynn: 1419 (?)**

Davis estimated a date of 1419 for the part of the northwest tower where most of the masons' marks are found.<sup>20</sup> Fawcett's arguments supported this and dealt with the confusing reference in the minutes of a town council meeting in 1453, when the “rebuilding” of the tower was apparently ordered to start.<sup>21</sup> He, Fawcett, notes that the mouldings of the arches inserted beneath the north-west tower, and in the projection which formed the west end of the outer north aisle are of very similar design to those at St Nicholas and also sees similarities between the Litcham and St Nicholas arcade bases and the tower bases at St Margaret's. He also pointed

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<sup>13</sup> Blomefield 1805-10, vol. 9, 117.

<sup>14</sup> Cattermole and Cotton 1983, 272.

<sup>15</sup> Davis 1954, 48.

<sup>16</sup> NRO Hare 5980, 227X3.

<sup>17</sup> Daunton, Heslop, Lunnon and Trend, forthcoming.

<sup>18</sup> NRO NCC Doke 21.

<sup>19</sup> NRO NCC Gelour 12.

<sup>20</sup> Davis 1952, 48.

<sup>21</sup> Fawcett 1975, 231-233 and illustrations on 244 and 246.

out the coincidence of masons' marks at both churches and adds that a council meeting held in March 1419 revealed concern about the condition of the tower - there were indications at the meeting that repair work had already started because the warden of the work asked to be excused because the carpenters and plumbers were being tardy in their work. This, concluded Fawcett, combined with the evidence of the masons' marks and design of the mouldings, "forcibly suggests" that the architect mason had been called in before this date to make a start on stabilising the tower by constructing the arches beneath the north and east tower walls, and across the first bay of what would be the new north aisle, which is where the masons' marks are found. Also, the angled string courses in the lower section of the tower - which meet to form a "ski-jump" feature - echo, or anticipate a similar design at Walpole St Peter.

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## *Appendix Two*

### *The Gigges family (1383-1506)*

Summary of the key documentary references to the family.

#### **Generation one**

##### **William Gigges (c. 1360-c. 1425)**

1383: With his father Robert, William was admitted to 3<sup>1/4</sup> acres of customary land in Wighton.<sup>1</sup> After this, he appeared frequently in the manor court rolls, most often renting and releasing small parcels (up to 20 acres) of base tenure manorial land - usually in association with other villagers and most notably with John Grys.

1397: Katarina Gigges (?his mother) fined 12d for brewing ale.<sup>2</sup>

1405-1425: Served regularly as a juror in the manor court.<sup>3</sup>

1411: Leased, with John Grys, the principal part of the manorial demesne at £11 6s 8d.<sup>4</sup>

1418: Raised 100 marks (£66 13s 4d) personally in one of a complicated series of land deals which included the purchase of the manor of Veutres in Burnham St Clement (Burnham Overy).<sup>5</sup> The manor remains in the family for several more generations.<sup>6</sup>

1422: With three others, was granted a messuage and 10 acres of land in Burnham Holmes.<sup>7</sup>

1425: Final record of his name in a transfer ('*alien'*) of three pieces of land by the mill, from Agnes Grys.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> RHA WCR December 21, 1383.

<sup>2</sup> RHA WCR March 29, 1397.

<sup>3</sup> RHA WCR 1405-25.

<sup>4</sup> TNA DL 29/289/4735.

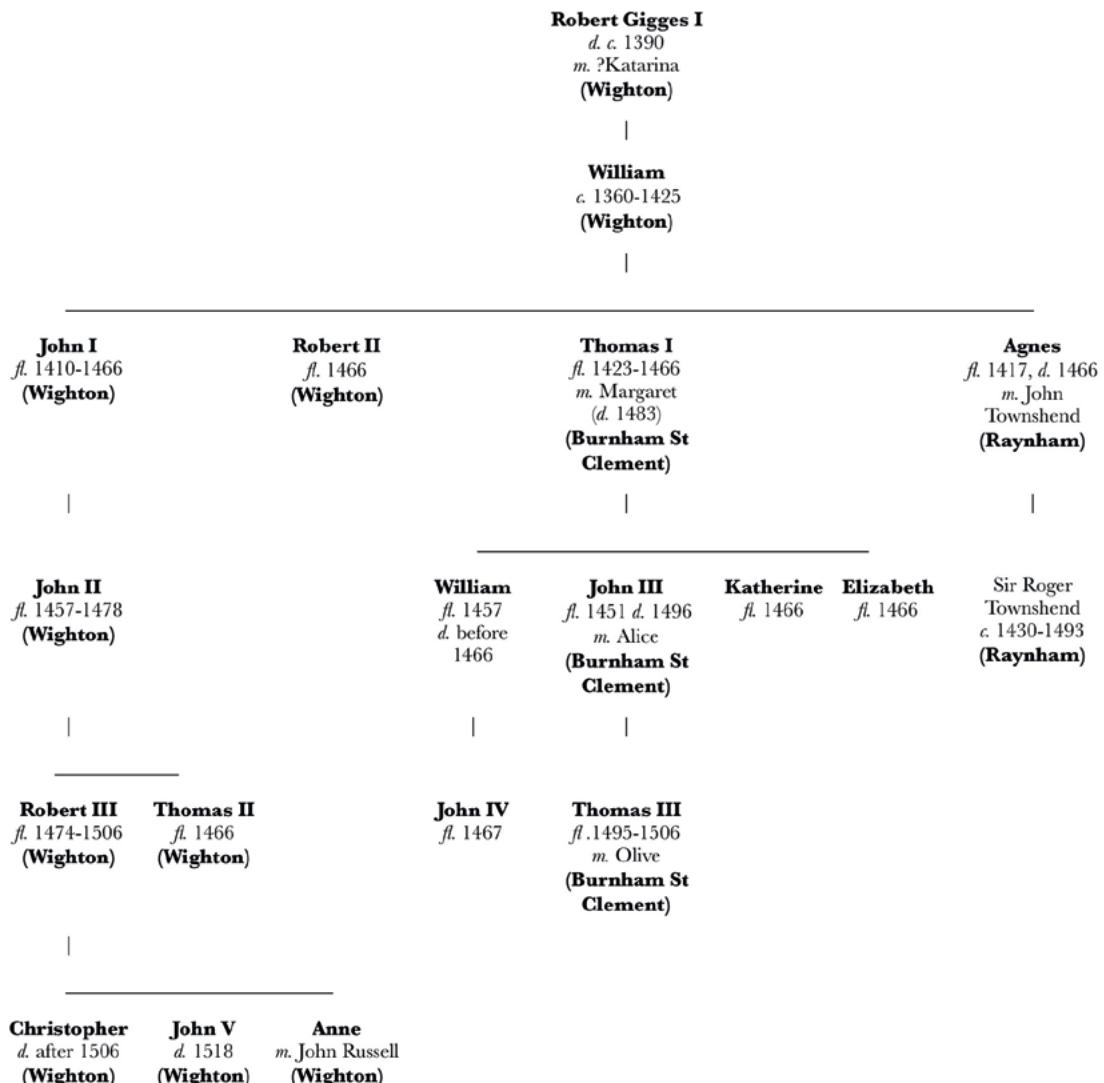
<sup>5</sup> TNA WARD 2/52/177/143; also TNA WARD 2/52A/178/64; E 42/138 and TNA WARD 2/52A/178/68.

<sup>6</sup> Blomefield 1805-1810, vol. 7, 20-21.

<sup>7</sup> TNA WARD 2/52/177/85.

<sup>8</sup> RHA WCR February 28, 1425.

## Giggses of Wighton and Burnham St Clement 1390-1518



## Generation two (sons and daughters)

### Thomas Gigges I (fl. 1423- d. 1466)

1423: Probably born c. 1393 in Wighton, by 1423 he was living in Burnham St Clement, when his brother John delivers him seisin of Veutres manor.<sup>9</sup>

1445: Described as “gentleman” in an indenture granting him continuing use of Veutres manor.<sup>10</sup>

1451: Enfeoffed his son John Gigges of the reversion of Veutres manor. Witnesses included William Calthorpe and Thomas Gurney.<sup>11</sup>

1457, 1462 and 1466: Co-beneficiary of three grants of land in the Burnhams - see John Gigges, below.

<sup>9</sup> TNA WARD 2/52A/178/68 and TNA WARD 2/52A/178/69.

<sup>10</sup> Maxwell Lyte 1900, Deed A. 5973.

<sup>11</sup> Maxwell Lyte 1906, Deed A. 11052.

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1466: Died. Substantial estate (probate dated May 27, 1467) included Veutres manor, and property in Burnham Thorpe and Stanhoe.<sup>12</sup> Bequests to the church of Burnham St. Clement and the guilds of St. Clement, and St. John the Baptist; to St. Margaret's, Burnham Norton, Stanhoe church and, the Carmelite priory of Burnham. Legacies to his children and to his nephew Thomas Gigges in Wighton. Lands bequeathed include his manor in Burnham and messuages called Makemaydes in Burnham Norton and Shenkwynnes in Stanhoe.

### **John Gigges I (fl. 1410-1466)**

1410: Aged about 13, “carried the basin and ewer to the church and gave water” to the godparents at Sir William Calthorpe’s christening, All Saints, Burnham Thorpe.<sup>13</sup>

1423: Granted Veutres manor<sup>14</sup> (see above) then, in 1423, delivered seisin of the manor to his brother Thomas.<sup>15</sup>

1432-1448: Three land and property transactions in association with John Townshend, John Smith (of East Raynham) in South Raynham (1432), Wellingham (1439) and Horningcroft (1448).<sup>16</sup>

Before 1458: Sued, with three others for £230 for return of Prussian merchandise abandoned from a disabled vessel.<sup>17</sup>

1444: Commissioned by the Bishop of Norwich to administer the goods and income of Coxford Priory - with John Townshend (his brother-in-law) and Robert Appulby.<sup>18</sup>

1449: Held an enclosure at Helhoughton (adjacent to West Raynham) called Millecroft, with adjoining meadow and marsh - with John Townshend and two others. Previously they held it with Sir Thomas Erpingham, Sir Simon Felbrigg, Sir Edmund Berry, William Paston and others, all at this point deceased.<sup>19</sup>

1453: Described as a draper in the Court of Pleas.<sup>20</sup>

1454: Expanded his interests and consolidates business relationship with the Townshends: enfeoffed of Hayles manor in Raynham St Mary, with Thomas Schuldham, John Fincham, William Gurney, John Townsend, Roger Townshend (John’s son) and John Eyer.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Maxwell Lyte 1900, Deed A. 5971.

<sup>13</sup> TNA C 139/52/66 mm.2-3.

<sup>14</sup> TNA E 42/340.

<sup>15</sup> TNA WARD 2/52A/178/68 and TNA WARD 2/52A/178/69.

<sup>16</sup> RHA RL 27 (2), RL 9/B, RL 29.

<sup>17</sup> TNA C 1/71/93. This is undated, but must be before the death of Robert Docking in 1458 (NRO NCC Brosyard 109).

<sup>18</sup> Moreton 1992, 8.

<sup>19</sup> Box RL 11/B at Raynham (I’m grateful to Dr Anthony Smith for pointing me towards this and several other references to the Gigges from documents in the Raynham Hall archives).

<sup>20</sup> TNA CP40/768.

<sup>21</sup> CPR 1910, 146.

1456: Had seisin of premises in Hillington and Congham, with the advowson of Hillington - with John Townshend, and John Yates of Norwich.<sup>22</sup>

1457: Expanded interests in Burnham St Clement. Along with his son John; his brother Thomas Gigges and John and William, his nephews; brother-in-law Roger Townsend, and John Yates of Norwich he was granted “messuages, lands, tenements, rents, services, closes, liberties etc, in the fields of Burnham St. Clements, with all rights, liberties and appurtenances in the towns and fields” there and in other Burnhams “to be held of the chief lord of the fee by the service thence due and right accustomed”.<sup>23</sup>

1462: His son John was co-beneficiary of another grant of land - this time in Burnham Norton - by William Grome. The beneficiaries once again included his own son John, Thomas Gigges and Thomas' son John, and Roger Townsend.<sup>24</sup>

1465: Ceded land, messuages, tenements, a mill, pasture and meadow - presumably in Wighton - to John Baker, vicar of Wighton. This parcel was previously held with several others including Roger Townsend and John Gigges III (son of Thomas Gigges of Burnham).<sup>25</sup>

1466: Grant by Geoffrey Shropham of Burnham Norton to Thomas Gigges of Burnham, Roger Townshend, Robert Pilly of King's Lynn, merchant, Robert Gigges of Wighton, John Gigges I (described as, senior, brother of Robert Gigges), and John Gigges III (son of Thomas Gigges), of three pieces of land in Burnham Overy.<sup>26</sup>

1468: By now deceased - his brother Robert was referred to as his executor.<sup>27</sup>

### **Agnes Townshend, nee Gigges (fl. 1416/17)**

1416/17: Married John Townshend (d. 1466) of Raynham.<sup>28</sup> Her son was Sir Roger Townshend.

### **Robert Gigges II (fl. 1463-68)**

Known only from a reference in the will of Thomas Gigges I, suits in the Court of Pleas in 1463 and 1465 when he was described as a yeoman,<sup>29</sup> and as his brother John's executor in 1468 (see above).

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<sup>22</sup> RHA RL 11/B.

<sup>23</sup> TNA WARD 2/51/177/27.

<sup>24</sup> TNA WARD 2/52A/178/86.

<sup>25</sup> BL Add. Ch. 76271.

<sup>26</sup> TNA WARD 2/52/177/83.

<sup>27</sup> TNA CP40/826.

<sup>28</sup> Roger Townshend grants land to his son and to Agnes on January 25 1417 (RHA R27, Raynham Hen IV-Hen VI) and January 26 1417 (R32, Deeds Raynham 1401-1419). It should also be noted that Roger's wife Eleanor was the daughter of Sir Thomas Gigges of Rollesby, near Great Yarmouth (Blomefield 1805-1810, vol. 7, 131). It seems likely that there is some connection with the Wighton Gigges.

<sup>29</sup> CP40/807.

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## Generation three (grandsons)

### John Gigges II (fl. 1457-78)

1457: Proof that he is living in Wighton (see John I, above).<sup>30</sup>

1469: Invested in a fifth share of messuages, lands, tenements, and rents with a liberty of foldcourse in South and North Creake at a total cost of 140 marks.<sup>31</sup>

1478: Owed 10 marks by Edmund Gosson of Burnham. Referred to as a draper.<sup>32</sup>

About 1480: sold the “manor” of “George of Wyghtones” in Wighton to Sir Roger Townshend II.<sup>33</sup>

### John Gigges III (fl. 1451- d.1496)

1451: Married to Alice.<sup>34</sup>

1457 and 1474: Living in Burnham St Clements.<sup>35</sup>

1483: Will of Margaret, wife of Thomas Gigges I referred to his wife Alice, and son Thomas III.<sup>36</sup>

1486: Described as a gentleman and a merchant.<sup>37</sup>

1496: Probate of will.<sup>38</sup>

## Generation four (great grandsons)

### Robert Gigges III (fl. 1474-d. 1506)

1474: Enfeoffed of five acres in Burnham St Clement in 1474, shared with his cousin John Gigges (III or IV) and one other.<sup>39</sup>

c. 1481: Equal highest tax assessment in Wighton at 26s 8d.<sup>40</sup>

1506: Date of his will which requests burial in the north aisle of Wighton church.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> TNA WARD 2/51/177/27. Also proves that Thomas Gigges is living in Burnham St Clements and has a son, John, also living there; and that a William Gigges is living in Burnham Westgate.

<sup>31</sup> NRO MC 2589/1, 917X4.

<sup>32</sup> CPR 1901, 88 (October 25, 1478).

<sup>33</sup> Moreton 1992, 214. He notes that it was acquired from John Gyggles of Wighton.

<sup>34</sup> Maxwell Lyte 1906, Deed A. 11052.

<sup>35</sup> TNA WARD 2/51/177/27 and Maxwell Lyte 1906, Deed A. 10772.

<sup>36</sup> NRO NCC Paynot 88.

<sup>37</sup> TNA CP40/895.

<sup>38</sup> NRO NCC Multon 8.

<sup>39</sup> Maxwell Lyte 1906, Deed A. 10772.

<sup>40</sup> TNA E179/242/28 - ffv.

<sup>41</sup> NRO NCC Ryxe 348.

### **Thomas Gigges II (fl. 1466)**

1466: Beneficiary of the will of his great uncle, Thomas Gigges I (above).

### **Thomas Gigges III (fl. 1495-d. 1505)**

1495: Resident in Burnham Overy. Jointly with Thomas Curson paid £200 for the manors of Hedenham, Kelling and Raynham.<sup>42</sup>

1505: Probate of will.<sup>43</sup>

## **End of the line**

The family name died out in the sixteenth century and the lands in Wighton passed by marriage to the Bedingfelds of Oxburgh.<sup>44</sup> Eight seventeenth- and eighteenth-century monuments and tombstones to the Bedingfelds survive in All Saints church. Most of these were descendants of William Gigges.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> CP 25/1/170/196, number 45.

<sup>43</sup> NRO NCC Ryxe 289.

<sup>44</sup> Blomefield 1805-1810, vol. 9, 206.

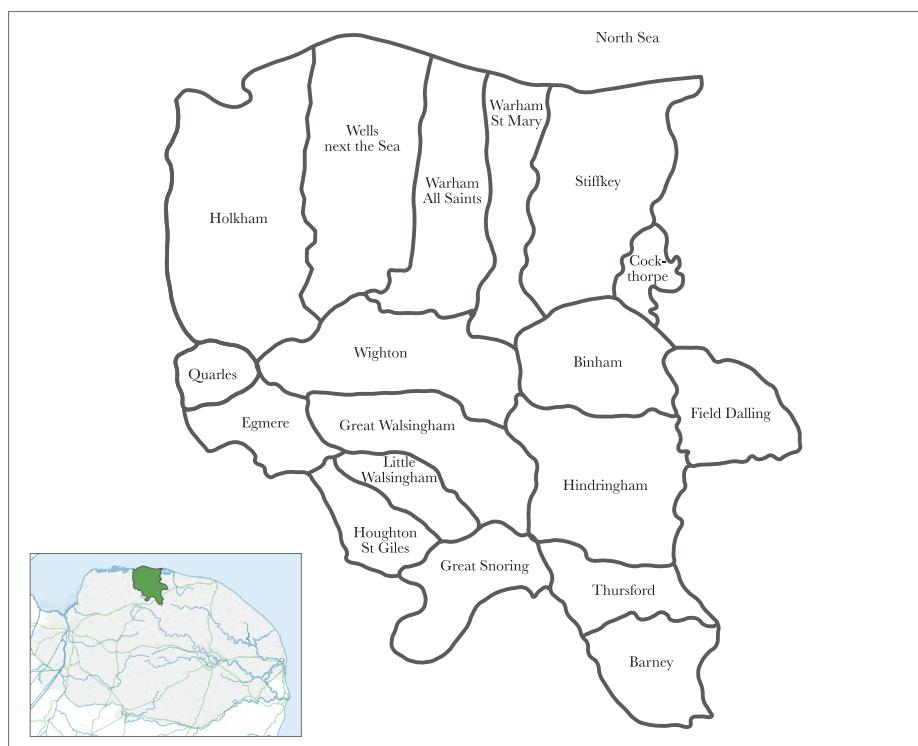
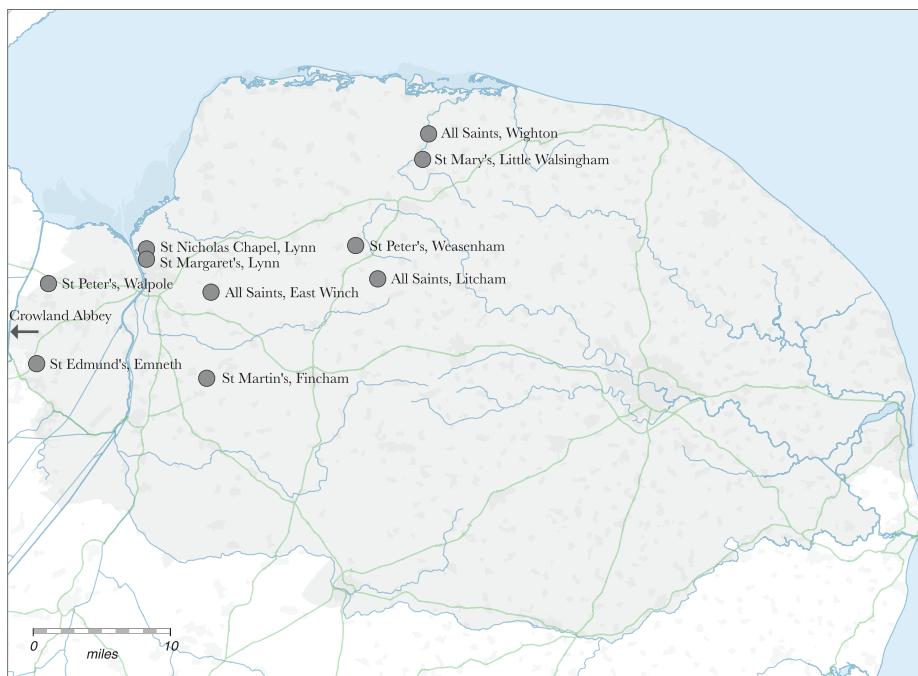
<sup>45</sup> Two other tombs noted by Blomefield (Blomefield 1805-1810, vol. 9, 207) have also been covered, or their inscriptions have been erased. The first marks the grave of the first Bedingfeld to take over the former Gigges estate: "Here lyeth Edmund Bedingfeld Esq. fifth son of Sir Edmund Bedingfeld, of Oxburgh, in the county of Norfolk, who dyed June 5th, 1565". The second is the earliest recorded tomb to a descendant of the Gigges: "Here also lyeth Christopher Bedingfeld, son and heir of the said Edmund, who dyed the 27th day of December, 1627, *aeta sua* 67."



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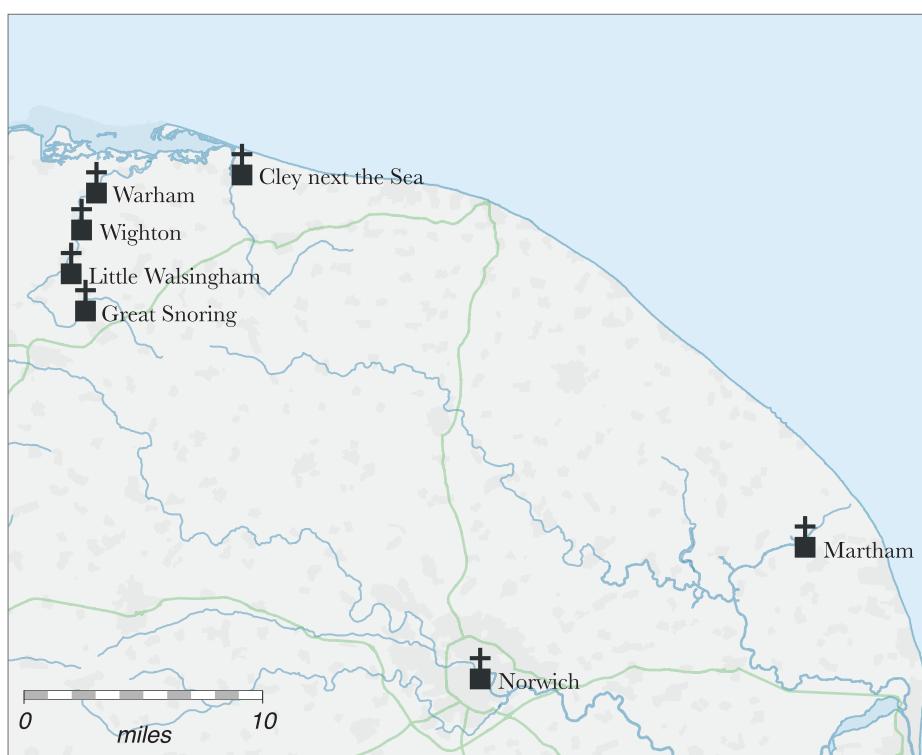
## *Maps and plates*

# Maps





Map 3: Surveyed in 1720 and drawn in 1723, this map shows extensive remnants of the old medieval field boundaries. The church is circled. *The lands of Christopher Bedingfeld in his manor of Wighton* (detail) by John Halsey. HHA E/M/160. [By permission of the Earl of Leicester.]



Map 4: The location of churches in Norwich and north Norfolk with medieval stained glass sharing the same cartoons or references.

## Historic images of Wighton church



Plate A (above left): Earliest-known image of Wighton church, drawn by Robert Ladbrooke c. 1820.

Plate B (above right): Earliest-known photograph of the interior of All Saints, Wighton taken in 1885, before the restoration of the nave. Just visible are the tops of the three surviving panels from the chancel screen, still *in situ* against the south side of the chancel arch.



Plate C: View of the church with the original medieval tower - heraldic shields just visible below the crenellations. Photo c. 1960.



Plate D: Aerial view of Wighton church also with the old tower intact, *c.* 1955.



Plate E: The church after the tower collapsed in 1965. It is believed that the photograph was taken the following morning. *[Plate A: UEA Special Collections. Plates B-E courtesy of the NRO].*

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## The church today



Plate F (top): All Saints, Wighton from the north.

Plate G (bottom): View of the church from the south-east.



Plate H (top left): The east window of the chancel built by James Woderove, 1440-1449.

Plate I (top right): Interior view of the chancel taken from several feet inside the chancel arch.

Plate J (above): The nave from just inside the south door. *[All photographs taken by the author, 2015-17].*

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## Examples of masons' marks

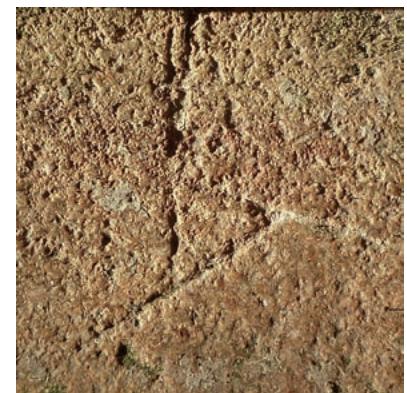
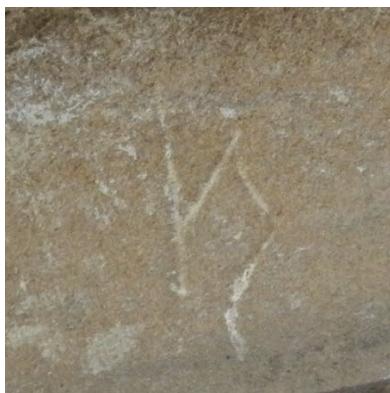


Plate K: Masons' marks on Wighton church arcade piers and arches. All are between approximately 4cm and 6cm high. There are more than 200 marks throughout the nave.



Plate L: The same mark found in five Norfolk churches (clockwise from top left): East Winch, St Nicholas Lynn, St Margaret's Lynn, Wighton and Walpole St Peter. [All photographs by the author]

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## The stained glass at Wighton



**1:** The upper section of sIV at Wighton All Saints - the east window in the south aisle.

**2:** St Faith is identified by the saw in her right hand.

**3:** This figure has been restored as St Catherine, though none of the original glass provides proof of this identification.

**4:** St Juliana or St Martha - both saints are associated with devils on a leash, though St Juliana is far more common.

**5:** St Agatha holds her flesh hook. See also [7 to 11].

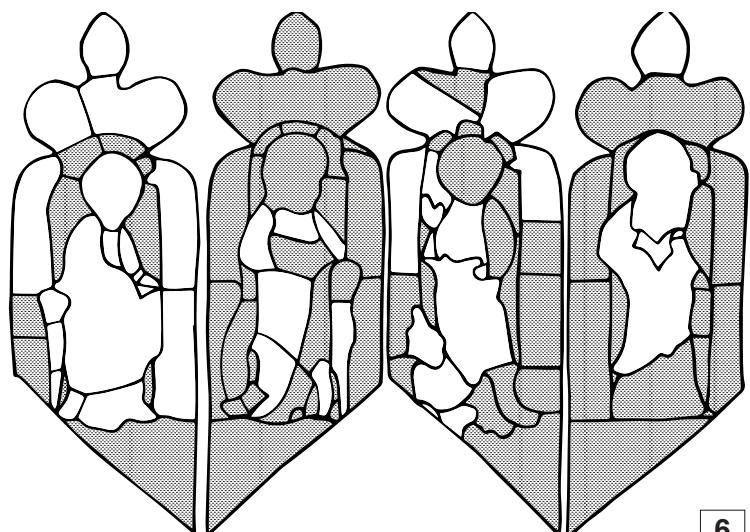
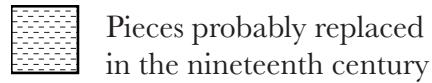
**6:** Shadings indicate original and replacement glass in plates [1 to 4] using CVMA convention.

*Note: all photography of the plates is by the author, except [1-4 and 18-21] which are by permission of the CVMA ([www.cvma.ac.uk](http://www.cvma.ac.uk)) and [72-77] which are by permission of the Norfolk Records Office (NRO PD 582/56).*

## Four female saints: sIV, Wighton



Key:



6



7



9



10



8



11

The same reference drawing was used as a source for these three Saint Agathas: at Wighton [7], St Peter Hungate [9] and Cley [10]. The Hungate example is badly damaged and the breasts, hands and part of the shaft of the flesh hook have been replaced.

8: The detail of the head of St Agatha at Wighton [8] shows some similarities of style with that at Cley [11] especially the chin, mouth, nose, halo and cross-hatching of the hair. But too much detail has been lost around the eyes of the Wighton version to be sure whether the same, or different hands were at work.



12



13



14



15



16

**13:** St Faith at Wighton is based on the same torso and drapery as the unknown saint [12] at Cley, though the original shapes of some of the glass pieces are different, the head in particular is more upright, and painted on a different glass shape.

The Wighton head of St Faith [detail 15] wears a garland similar in design, though different in detail to that worn by St Cecilia at Cley [14 and detail in 16].

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## Four male saints: nIV, Wighton



17: The upper section of nIV, the east window of the north aisle at Wighton.



## Key



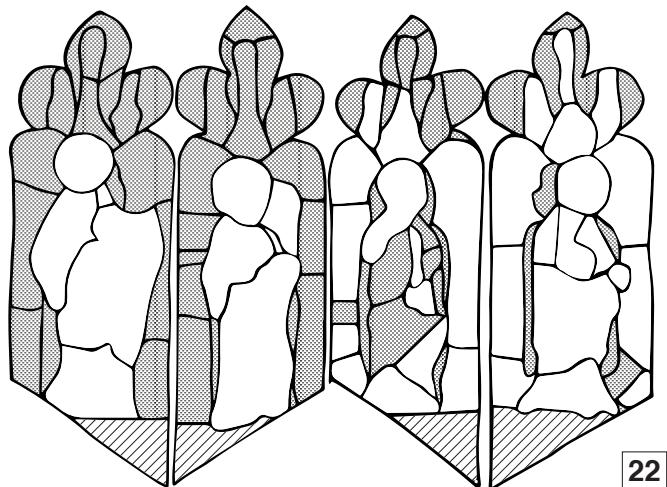
Original pieces



Pieces probably replaced in the nineteenth century



Pieces replaced during the last restoration



22

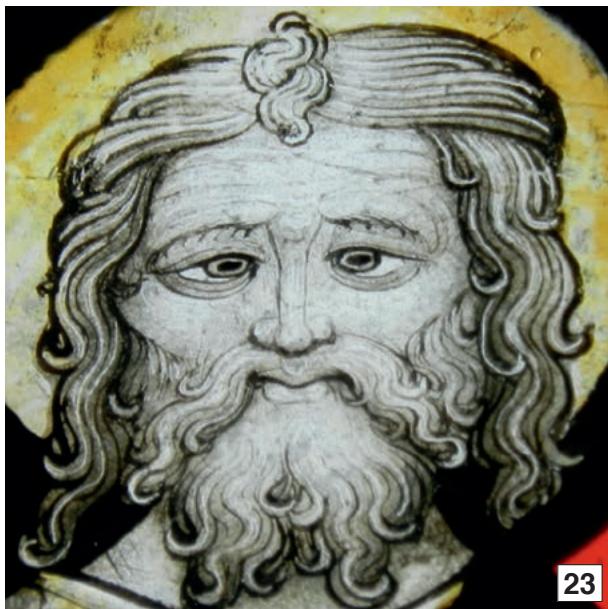
**18:** St Peter - identified by his tonsure and key. The lowest section of his robe, which includes his feet, is a modern replacement which distorts his pose somewhat.

**19:** St Andrew - identified by his saltire. The seaweed pattern between the upper armatures is clear evidence that the original background was a cloth of honour.

**20:** St Bartholomew - holding his flayer's knife.

**21:** This saint, holding a book, cannot be positively identified, but he might be Paul, John or Mark, all of whom are associated with books.

**22:** Shadings indicate original and replacement glass in plates [18 to 21] using CVMA convention.



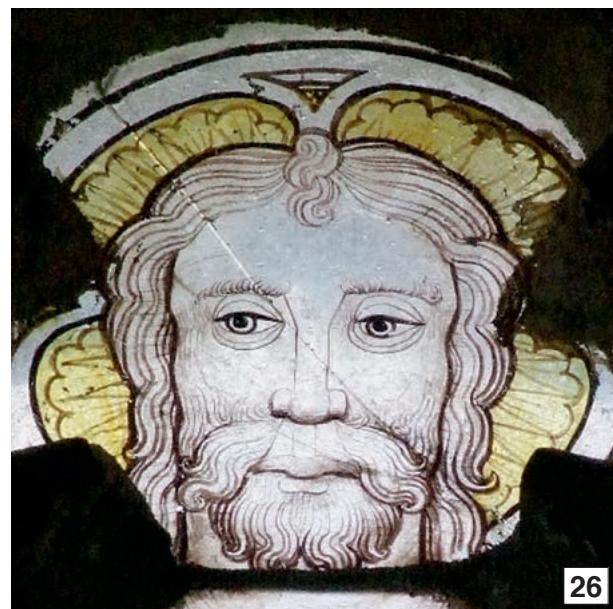
23



24



25



26

**23:** St Bartholomew at Wighton (nIV 2c).

**24:** Unknown saint at Wighton (nIV 2d) which seems to have been made by the same workshop, probably the same artist, as St Bartholomew. The halos are different but the detail around the collar and the three shadow lines beneath the eye, as well as the irises, pupils and liner along the eyelid have been drawn in the same way.

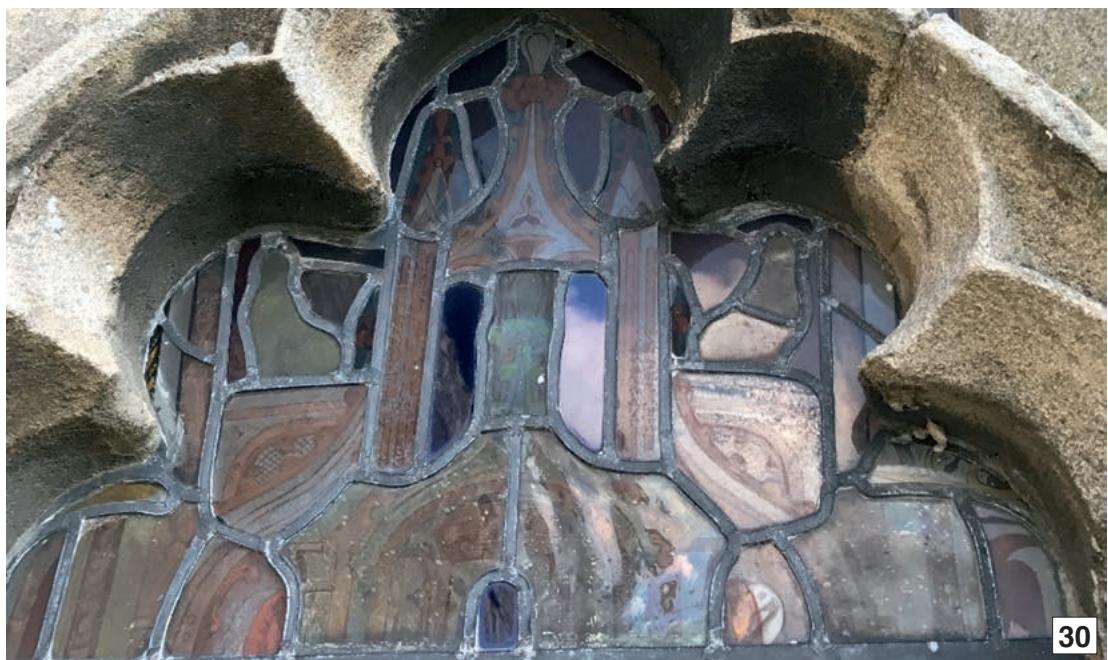
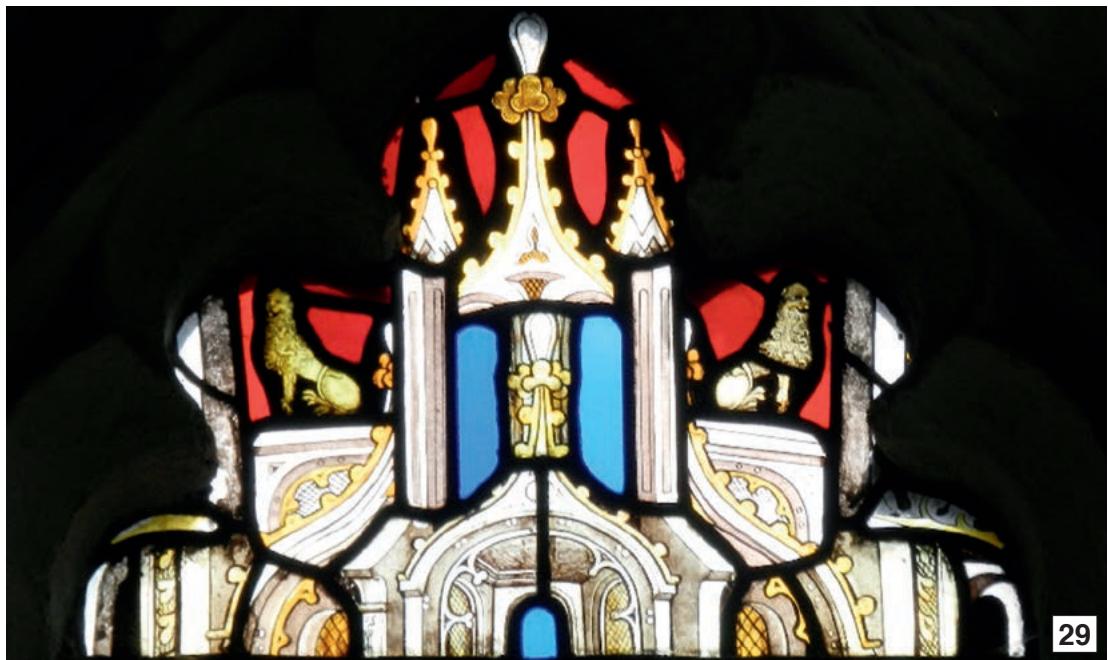
**25:** Head of resurrected Christ at Cley: perhaps by the same hand as the Wighton saints above.

**26:** Unknown saint or figure at Great Massingham with strong similarities to **23**, **24** and **25**.

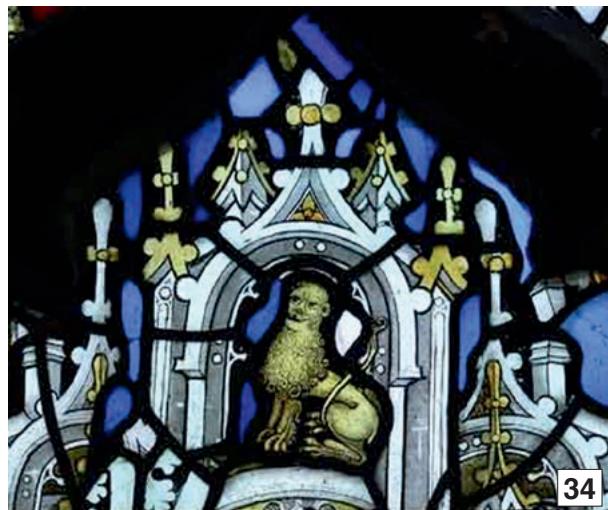
## Main light canopy heads



The canopy heads in the north aisle at Wighton are heavily restored. In [27] which is most complete and set in nIV 3a, the original glass comprises only the central canopy and its main pinnacle; the left hand canopy, and the body and wings of the eagle. The remainder of the glass appears to be Victorian and the restorer has apparently relied on more complete examples of canopies such as those at Swanton Abbott [28] - glazed in 1432 - for inspiration. Fragments of similar eagles and architectural features can also be found at Warham and East Barsham.



**29:** Very little of this canopy head (sIV 3a) is original, as the reverse view [30] shows - it has been flipped to make comparisons easier. Only the lions *sejant*, the two central canopies sections and a single fragment of a canopy on the lower right-hand side are medieval glass. Its companion piece in 3c (not shown in detail but visible in plate [1]) is almost entirely composed of replacement glass, though the lions appear to be original.



**31:** These fragments of a pedestal were among the loose glass found at Wighton. The curved cut-out on the upper surface may have been shaped to accommodate a seated lion or other beast. There are some similarities with other lions and pedestals: a fragment set in the north window at Warham [32], another fragment in sVI in Cley [33] and a canopy head at St Peter Hungate [34].

**35:** Upper part of a lion under a canopy - from the north window at Warham.

---

## Scroll-bearing angels



36



37

**36:** Scroll-bearing angel - one of seven at St Peter Hungate whose torso is modelled on the same design as one at Great Snoring [37] and the Wighton versions [38 and 39], though unlike the examples at Snoring and Hungate, the Wighton angels wear tippets.

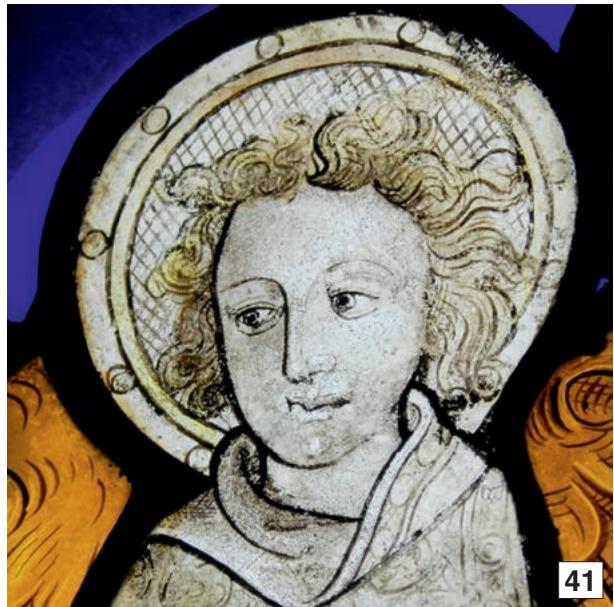


**38:** Canopy head nIV 3b at Wighton. The wings are replacements: the new design doesn't match the tips of the original wing feathers which still protrude at the extreme left and right bottom corners of the scroll. The originals may have followed the design of the wings of one of the angels at St Peter Hungate [36].

**39:** Canopy head sIV 3b at Wighton is heavily-restored - only the torso and scroll are medieval.



40



41



42

**40:** Bust of an angel at Warham compared with the similar one at Wighton [41]. They are clearly based on a reversal of the same design or cartoon, but the hair of the Wighton version is executed in a much freer and less intricate manner, the face is rounder, the brows arched lower, and there is a vertical line on one side of the mouth which is not seen at Warham.

**42:** One of two scroll-bearing angels at Martham carrying the same text as at Wighton. The head and tippet are the work of a restorer, who seems to have used the Wighton example as a model.

## Fragments of figures



43



44

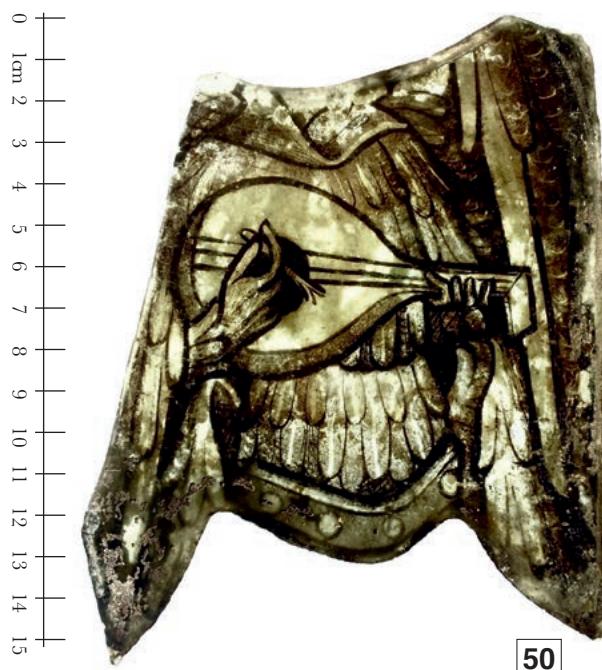


45

**43 and 44:** Fragments of loose glass found at Wighton. Each appears to show part of a tonsured head. In fragment [43] there is a window in the background and, therefore, a high chance that this is an image of the donor of the window in which it was displayed. The tonsure indicates ecclesiastical orders and we know that it was John Lynn, the Norwich cathedral cellarer, who paid for the chancel windows in 1455-56. This could be a fragment of his portrait. The other figure could be a saint such as St Peter, or another ordained donor such as the cellarer or a local chaplain - several left legacies to the church (see pp. 152-153).

**45:** Two fragments of what is perhaps the hand of a musician angel (above) and three fragments from a saint set against a cloth of honour (below).

## Musician angels



**46-49:** The four angels playing lutes in the upper lights of sX (2a-d) are all based on the same cartoon. All use a quill plectrum with a pen holder's grip, all have six wings, feathered bodies and bare feet, and all have a long and distinctly crooked little finger shown against the fret. However, there are subtle variations to the coronets, tippets, belts and feathers, and stylistic differences suggest they may have been painted by different artists.



52



53



54



55

**50** (opposite): This fragment of loose glass from Wighton is traced from the same cartoon as the angels in **[46-49]**, but this musician wears no tippet.

**51** (opposite): Fragment of an angel's head in an architectural setting, also from Wighton.

**52:** Detail of sX 2d after restoration.

**53:** An angel head in nX 2d at Wighton appeals to have a rebec or violin-type instrument resting on its left shoulder - the ends of two strings can be made out together with the arch of a bow. Similarly positioned violins are shown at Besthorpe **[54]** and Warham **[55]**.



56



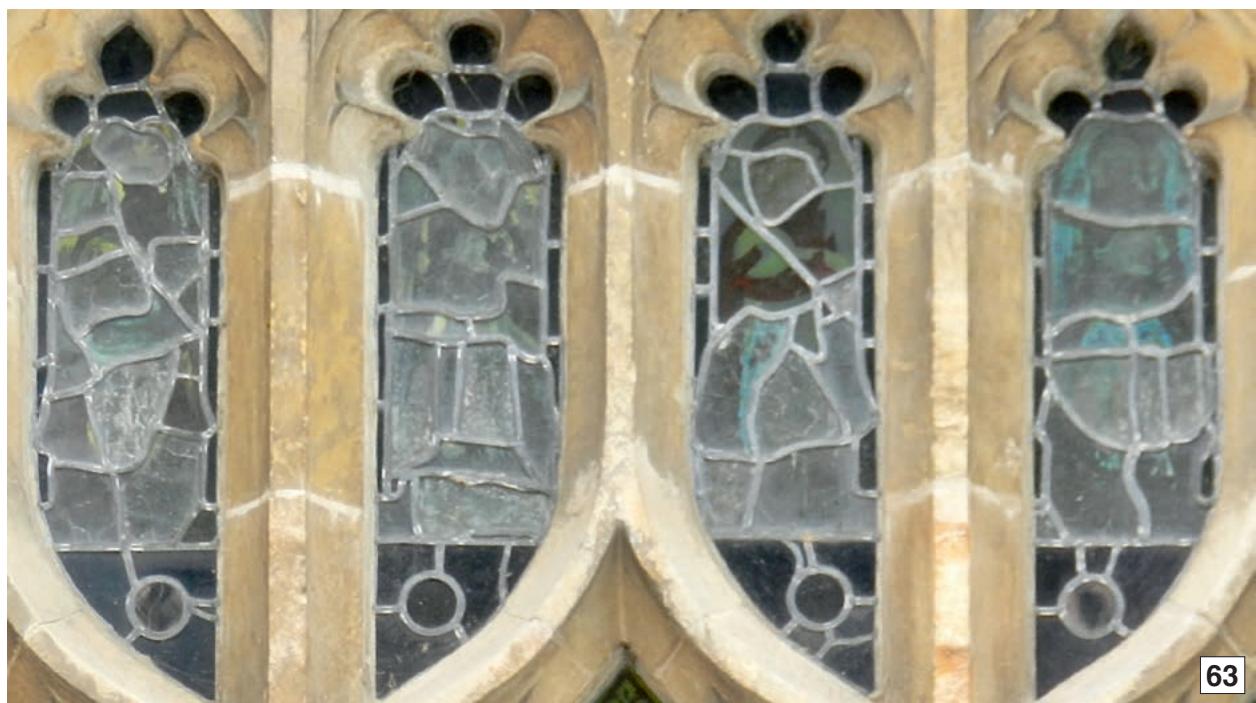
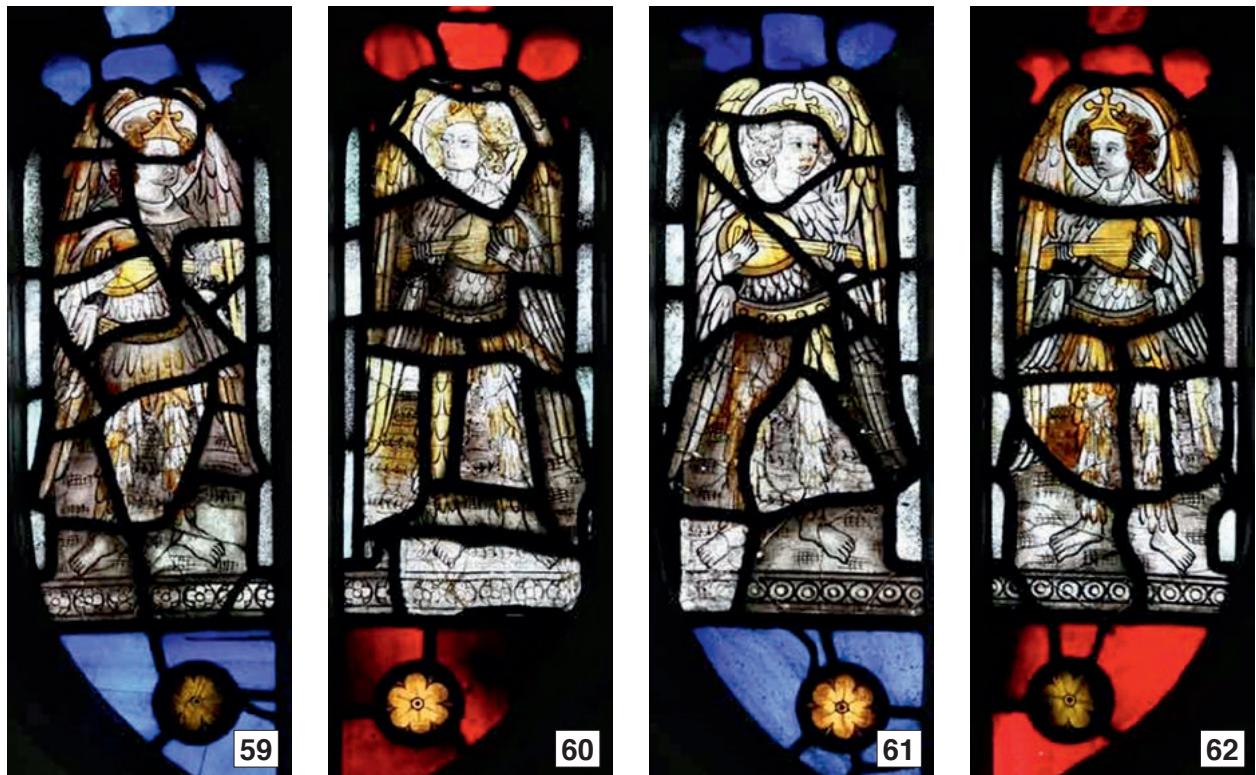
57



58

**56:** Montage showing how two of the musician angels [46 and 47] are likely to have been installed in the tracery lights of the Wighton clerestory. (The measurements were verified when scaffolding was erected on the aisle roofs in August 2017, but the montage is indicative only.)

**57 and 58:** The images are too damaged to be sure, but these details show some apparent similarities in the style of the angel in sX 2a at Wighton [46/57], and in nII 2c at Little Walsingham [58/61]. The enlarged pupils are particularly distinctive.



**59-62:** The musician angels in nII at Little Walsingham which survived the fire of 1961.

**63:** A flipped detail of the exterior of this window shows the replacement sections around the upper part of [61] but confirms that most of the head [58], shown in detail opposite, is original.

## Angels on wheels



64



65



66



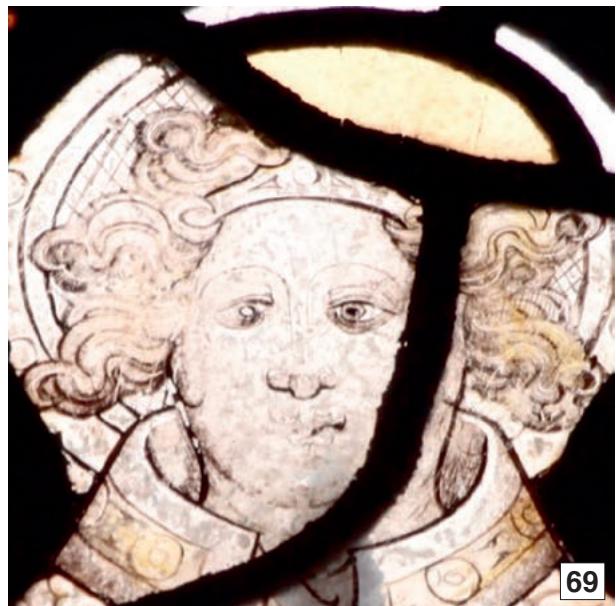
67

The angels on wheels [64 and 65] are from the tracery lights 2b and 2c of nX in Wighton. A similar head and torso [66] was found in the church chest. They almost certainly share the same source or cartoon as the angels once in the main lights of sII at Little Walsingham [72 and 73]. The lower right wing of [65] is formed from a piece of drapery from another figure.

67: Fragments of angel wings painted on yellow-orange glass found loose at Wighton. The wing on the left (which is fractured along the top) is comparable with the lower parts of the wings of an angel of the same design as [64 and 65], though the glass piece is of a slightly different shape. Similar coloured wings were once at Little Walsingham - overleaf [75]. The wing on the right of plate [67] - also found loose at Wighton - may be from an angel of a different design which no longer survives. However, the matching glass and style suggest it was painted at the same time as the other wing fragment. Another fragment of orange wing is set at the top of [64].



68



69



70

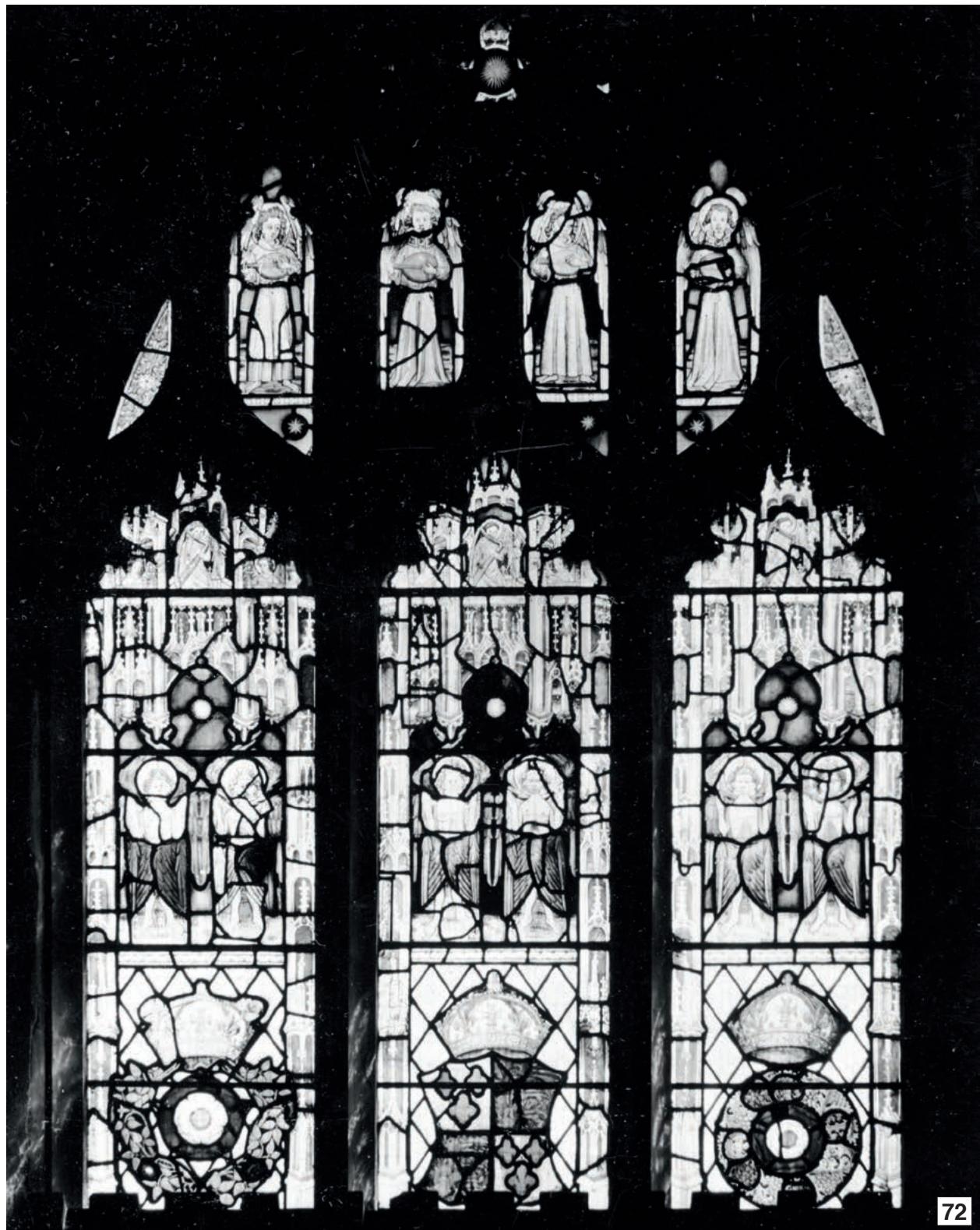


71

Similarities in the delineation around the eyes, the noses and the lower lips suggest that these angels' heads at Warham [68]; Great Snoring [69]; Wighton (loose fragment) [70] and St Peter Hungate [71] may have been painted by the same artist.

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## The glass at St Mary's, Little Walsingham

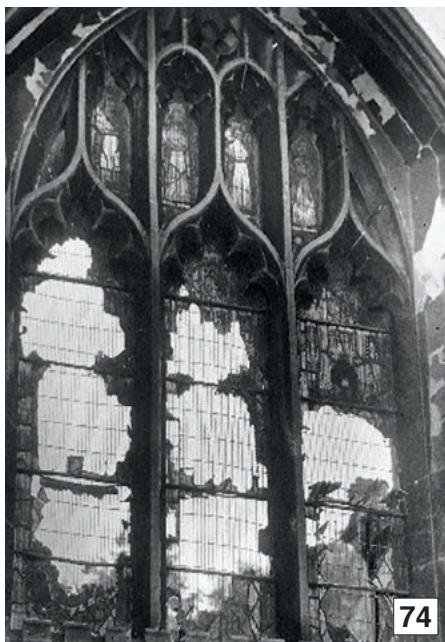


72

72: The south chancel window (sII) at St Mary's, Little Walsingham before the fire of 1961.



73



74



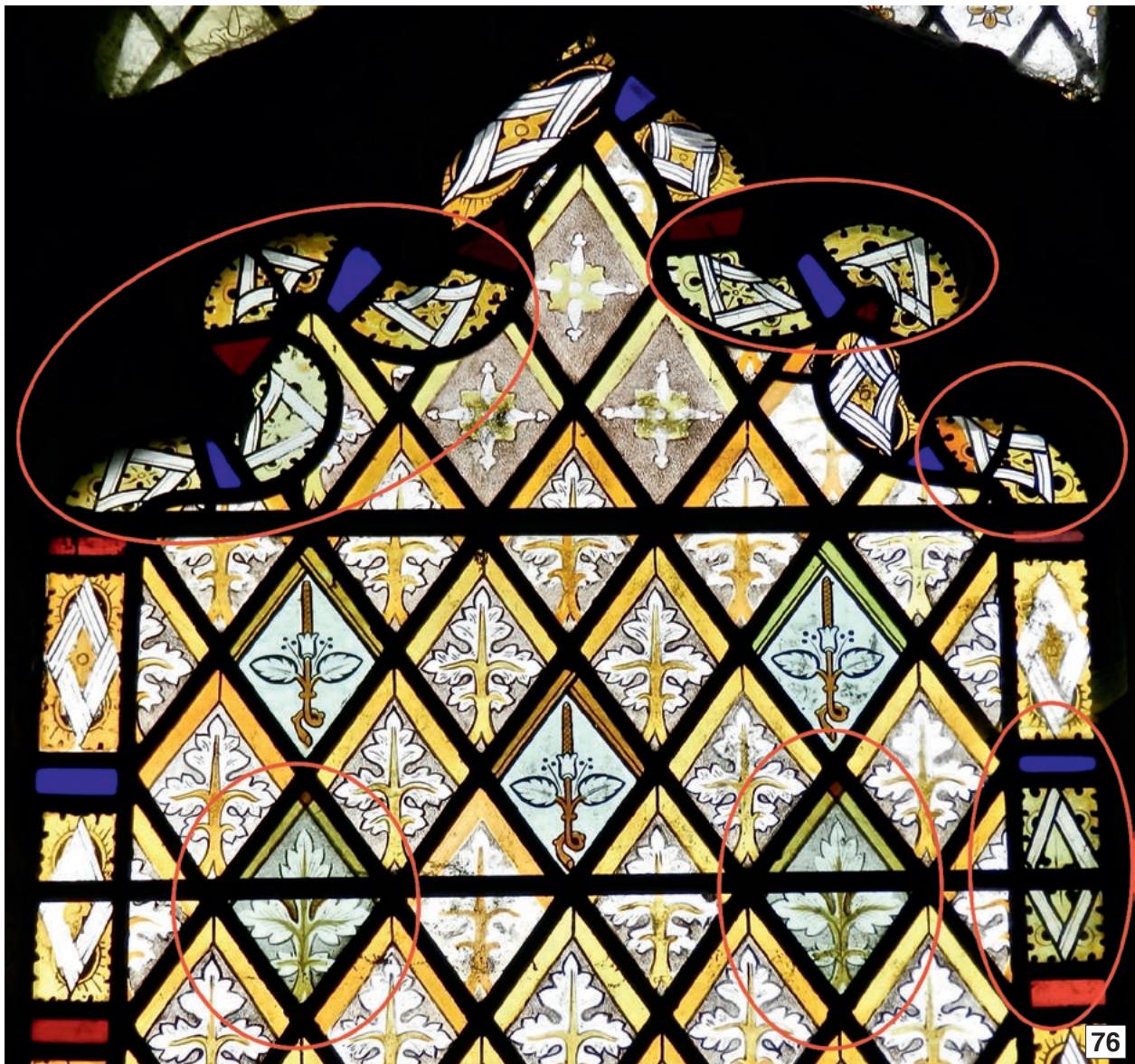
75

**73:** Detail of sII 3b, St Mary's, Little Walsingham before the 1961 fire.

**74:** Photograph of sII taken the day after the 1961 fire.

**75:** Colour detail of sII - the resolution is, unfortunately, too poor to enlarge further.

## Quarries



76: Ten medieval quarries survive (circled) in nX 3b at Wighton. They have been copied by Victorian glaziers but the copies differ slightly. The original diamond-shaped quarries on greenish glass have smaller semi-circular motifs without radial lines emanating from them. The original *cingfoil* devices are different in colour and have a small brown diamond at the apex of the quarry. Those which fit around the curves at the top of the tracery may be in their original locations.

## Inscriptions and foliate fragments

0  
1cm  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10



77

0  
1cm  
2  
3  
4



78

0  
2cm  
4  
6  
8  
10  
12  
14  
16  
18  
20



79

**77:** Fragments of three (or perhaps two) different inscriptions from the loose Wighton glass.

**78:** Part of an illuminated initial letter, probably a G.

**79:** Foliate motifs found loose, but originally from the slips and eye compartments in the upper traceries of the nave windows at Wighton. It is conceivable that the design on the smallest fragment (bottom left) is not part of a leaf, but the foot of a lion or eagle.

## Other fragments from Wighton (mainly architectural features)

0  
1cm 2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7



80

0  
1cm 2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7



81

0  
1cm 2  
3  
4



82

0  
1cm 2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7



83

0  
1cm 2  
3  
4  
5



84

0  
1cm 2  
3  
4  
5



85

0  
1cm 2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10



86



87



88



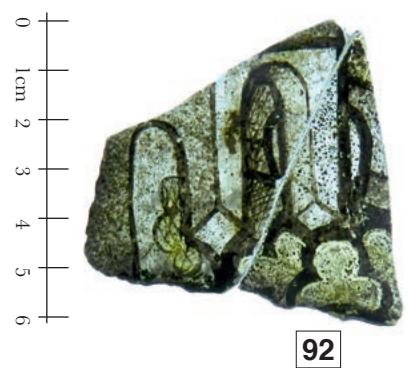
89



90



91



92

**80:** Main light canopy fragment - one of several examples which are much deteriorated.

**81:** Underside of a dome. **82:** Rod and foliate decoration from the margin of a main light.

**83:** Fragments of architectural frame. **84:** Pinnacle fragment from a main light. **85:** Unknown.

**86:** Main light canopy head. **87:** Cusp from an arch. **88:** Seaweed-patterned fabric or decorative edge, perhaps from a cloth of honour. **89:** Fragments of an architectural frame and pinnacle probably from a main light. **90:** Possibly drapery fragments from a main light figure.

**91:** Arch section matching those in the sIV tracery lights. **92:** Underside of a canopy.

## Angels in other churches



93



94



95



96



97



98

**93-97:** Lutanists and violinists drawn from the same cartoon or reference - at Great Snoring [93], Cawston [94], Weston Longville (head restored) [95], St Peter Hungate [96] and Cockthorpe [97]. The artist who painted this head at Warham [98] may also have painted the heads at Snoring and Hungate.



