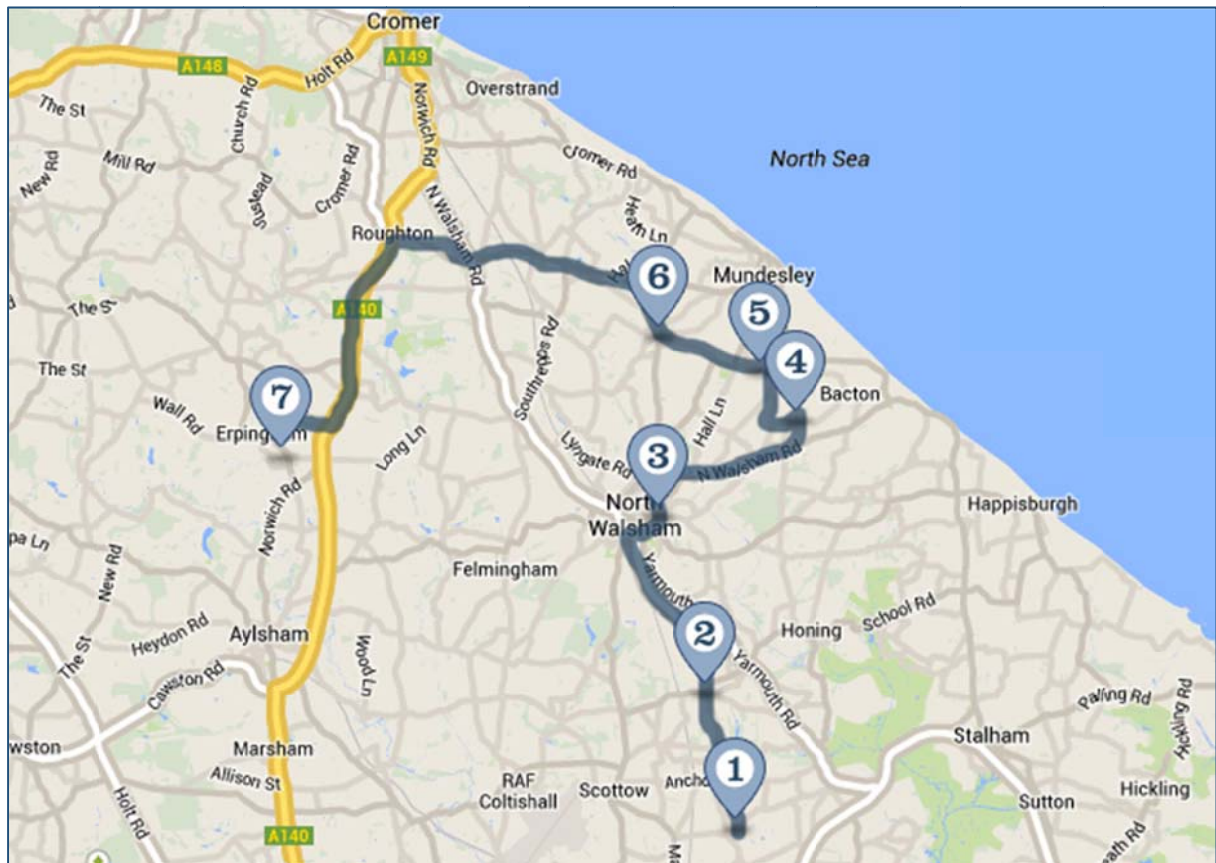


The Griffon Guide

The Magnificent Churches Trail

North East Norfolk is blessed with a very fine array of medieval churches. When travelling around this area, you will find every church is worth a visit, and has many stories to tell. Here is a selection of some of the most fascinating features to be found and there are many more to discover when you visit them.





1. St Mary's Church, Tunstead **Church Lane, Tunstead NR12 8HT** **(map ref OS 630322)**

The town of North Walsham and many of the surrounding villages in the Griffon area were part of the old Tunstead Hundred and the church of St. Mary reflects the wealth and power the place once held.



As you enter, pause and note the fine iron work on the door. Inside there is a bound poor box and a well preserved 15th century screen with 16 panels along the dado. Note the low walls on either side of the nave; these date from the 15th century when congregations would stand rather than sit for services – there were no pews in those days. But those who were elderly, sick or infirm would be permitted to sit on the low walls – hence the saying – 'going to the wall.'



In the chancel there are two very unusual features to be seen. A set of steps to the north of the sanctuary that lead to a platform built about two metres above the level of the sanctuary and a vaulted chamber beneath with a door to access this from the south side of the sanctuary. It has been suggested this platform could have been a stage to perform mystery plays or display holy relics and the chamber perhaps a charnel house but no-one knows for sure. Have a look and decide for yourself.

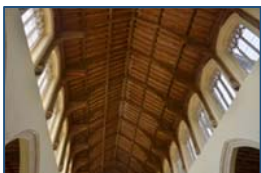


2. St Mary's Church, Worstead **Westwick Road, Worstead NR28 9AL** **(map ref OS 630326)**

Most people know that Worsted, the woollen cloth, originates from the village. This 'wool church' is truly a testimony to the wealth it brought to the area. Did you know that when the trade became industrialised in the woollen mills of the north, Bradford was nick-named *Worstedopolis*?



The screen is worthy of note and on the far right includes a rare depiction of St. William of Norwich and on the extreme right is Saint Uncumber (the Christian martyr Wilgefortis) with her facial hair. Her father wanted her to marry the king of Sicily, but she had taken a vow of virginity. So she prayed to become unattractive: the result was that a moustache and beard grew on her face and her suitor withdrew. Her father accordingly had her crucified: while on the cross she prayed that all who remembered her passion should be liberated from all encumbrances and troubles.



A contrast to this airy magnificent medieval church are unusual Victorian box pews which only allow the congregation within them to see the preacher in his pulpit.



Features to look out for within include a Victorian bier that once brought the coffins of local people from their house to the church for their burial service. There are memorial brasses and a full size working loom which reflects the ancient weaving trade that made the village great in its day. John Cubitt, the last true Worsted weaver of Worstead died in 1882 aged ninety



one.

Find the tall ladder propped up against the wall to the left of the door and wonder at the local boy choristers who would climb up it, then get on each other's shoulders to climb through the door at the top!

There is also a fine war memorial, complimented with photographs of the men and women of the village who served in both the First and Second World Wars.



3. St Nicholas Church

**Market Place, North Walsham NR28 9AL
(map ref OS OS 628330)**

The distinctive ruined tower of St. Nicholas can be seen for miles around. It once stood 147ft tall but suffered its first fall on the 16th May, 1724. The bells had been rung all the previous day for the Ascension Day Fair and a structural weakness finally gave way early the following morning. Nobody was hurt – a lucky escape for all concerned. More of the ruinous part of the tower that remained was blown down in the gales of February 1836. No more dramatic falls have occurred to date.



There are many interesting features within the church. Among them is the fine painted screen, the telescopic font cover, and the double sided board which honours King Charles on one side and the Commonwealth on the other.



The tomb of William Paston, founder of The Paston School is in the chancel. The full-length, recumbent figure of Sir William in his armour is surrounded by an impressive monument featuring his family crest – the Griffon. Built in his own lifetime, Paston commissioned London mason John Key to make the monument for the grand sum of £200. Sir William died two years after its completion in October, 1610.



There is a fine, iron bound ancient parish chest that was the town's first bank.

You will also find war memorials, memorial books and two memorials connected to the 1/6th Battalion, The Norfolk Regiment Cyclists who were based in the town during The First World War.



It is worth finding the misericords in the chancel aisle. Lift the seat and you will discover a magnificent woodwose or woodhouse - an East Anglian wild man covered in hair, hunting with his rough-hewn club in hand.

There is an audio guide for St. Nicholas Church.

All the rural churches on this trail have car parks or street parking close by. However, for St Nicholas you will need to use the city centre car park in Vicarage Rd, North Walsham NR28 9DH.



4. All Saints Church

**Church Lane, Edingthorpe NR28 9BT
(map ref OS 632333)**

Edingthorpe is an ancient round towered church (Saxon lower half with a late medieval upper). Within are late 14th century wall paintings including a fine depiction of St. Christopher.



Do take time to note the War Memorial lychgate and the names inscribed upon it. Another connection with the First World War was War Poet Siegfried Sassoon who knew Edingthorpe as child when he stayed there at the rectory for two months in 1897. When he wrote his autobiography *The Old Century and Seven More Years* (1938), he recalled the church:



“It had a very special dignity and simplicity, standing there on its low hill above the harvest fields, as though it were the faithful servant of the life around it. All churches are alike in the eyes of our Maker, it now seemed to be saying; it evokes in me a sense of local England and the centuries behind it, - the harvests it has seen and the pathos of those humble folk who had toiled and died and had been ‘of this parish.’”



5. St Peter and St Paul Church

**The Street, Knapton NR28 0SF
(map ref OS 630334)**

The church of St Peter & St Paul, Knapton has one of the most remarkable double-hammer beam roofs in the country. Constructed in 1503 it is one of the widest known, crossing about 12 metres in a single span – a truly remarkable feat. A host of angels gaze down upon the viewer giving the whole vision a heaven-like quality. However the debate continues as to whether the roof was actually made for the church or recovered from the wreck of a ship transporting it to another church.



In the churchyard to the right of the church door is the gravestone of Commander Jeafferson Miles, RN. It is inscribed with the legend "the vindicator of Nelson." This is quite true, after Horatio Nelson faced claims made in Parliament that he had mistreated Republican prisoners while at Naples, Commander Miles was the man who spoke up and strenuously refuted the allegations against the great maritime hero.





6. St. Botolph Church

Front St, Trunch NR28 0AH
(map ref OS 628334)

The font canopy in St Botolph's dates from around 1500. Ornately carved in oak with slender pillars forming a hexagonal enclosure, it is one of only four of its kind in England. The others are to be found in St. Mary's, Luton 1350, St. Peter Mancroft, Norwich 1450 and Durham Cathedral 1680.



Admiral Lord Nelson's daughter Horatia married Philip Ward, the son of Marmaduke Ward, who had served as a curate of Trunch for thirty-seven years. Her memorial stone is in the chancel of St Botolph's church (although only visible when the carpet is rolled back).



7. St. Mary's Church

Eagle Road, Erpingham NR11 7AD
(map ref OS 619331)

In the south aisle within the church of The Blessed Virgin Mary is the monumental brass of Sir John de Erpingham in full armour who died on 1 August 1370. His son was Sir Thomas Erpingham who paid for the tower of the church to be erected. Both father and son were loyal professional soldiers to their King. Sir Thomas will be best remembered for leading Henry V's archers at the Battle of Agincourt. A reproduction of his banner hangs in the church. Sir Thomas also features in Shakespeare's Henry V where he is Thomas, regarded with affection by the King on the eve of battle.



You will find more information about the church here:
<http://www.norfolkchurches.co.uk/edingthorpe/edingthorpe.htm>