

Small but Perfectly Formed

The Parish of St Peter Hungate

A self-guided trail of
Norwich's medieval churches
to celebrate the city's cultural heritage



St Peter Hungate
Elm Hill
Princes Street
Monastery Court
Waggon & Horses Lane

Includes one of the lost
medieval churches of Norwich



Medieval Norwich and its Churches

For the first time in its history, and under a new initiative led by the Norwich Historic Churches Trust working closely with its heritage partners, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Norwich is presented as a significant medieval city through its churches.

Norwich is a City of Churches. It has a collection of thirty-one medieval churches, more than any other European city north of the Alps, memorials in flint and stone to its rich heritage and former position as the second city in the kingdom. In the High Middle Ages (from about 1200 to 1550) Norwich was also described as Europe's most religious city, with a tradition of anchorites and hermits and a number of informal (and fairly transient) groups of women living together in chastity, but also which were in all likelihood influenced by the *béguinages* (establishments housing members of a lay sisterhood) of the Low Countries.



Image: St Gregory

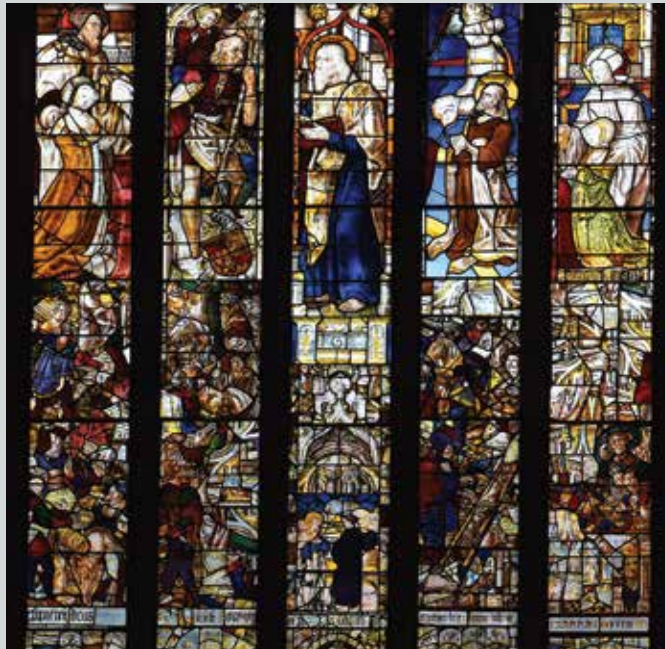


Image: St Stephen's

According to the Domesday Book of 1086 there were between forty-nine and fifty-four churches and chapels in Norwich. Of these at least eight existed before the Norman Conquest but there were possibly many more – up to about twenty-five. The pre-Conquest churches would have been simple timber buildings with a rectangular nave and a slightly narrower chancel. Being built of timber there is little surviving evidence of them. Many of the early pre-Conquest churches were lost as the Normans drastically changed the city landscape by building the castle and the cathedral, and moving the old Saxon market place from Tombland.

By the mid-13th century there were around sixty churches and chapels, after which the number gradually declined. The 15th century witnessed a major programme of extension, alteration or rebuilding of the city's churches which provided the legacy visible today. Almost all the churches were refurbished; in particular the naves which were the responsibility of the parish. Evidence of this can be seen today at St Peter Hungate, rebuilt by the Paston family during the 1460s and at St Gregory with its wall paintings of St George, considered one of the finest of its type in the country.

The money to pay for the work came from the wealthy citizens of Norwich in donations and bequests left to the church in which they worshipped and in which they were later buried. Several of these citizens became prominent Mayors of Norwich.

In 1502 there were still forty-six churches and chapels in Norwich but the number was reduced during the Reformation when the city's great priories were closed and sold and fourteen churches were closed. There were further church closures during the late nineteenth century and four churches lost to bombing in 1942 (Sts Benedict, Paul, Michael-at-Thorn, and Julian).

Currently there are thirty-one medieval churches within the City of Norwich, nine are still in use as places of worship, eighteen are managed by the Norwich Historic Churches Trust which finds suitable tenants for them, three are in the care of The Churches Conservation Trust and one is privately owned.



Image: St Peter Mancroft



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Each of the historical buildings mentioned in this trail is different, but each is fascinating – and they add a layer of meaning to the medieval churches by revealing the communities they were created by and for, and for whom they are still central points.

The trail begins as you approach the parish from St Andrews Plain, start your walk at the enamelled sign on the railings which describes Elm Hill.

1 St Christopher's Church

Note the blue plaque at No 5 Princes Street across the road from St Peter Hungate marking the location of one of Norwich's lost medieval churches, St Christopher's. This early medieval church burnt down in the 13th century, and its own parish was divided between St Andrew and St Michael at Plea. Before that it would have adjoined Hungate.

As you walk along to the corner of Elm Hill look up – you will see your first set of parish boundary markers on the side the first house, the 'HSP' (Hungate, St Peter) plaques were added in 1834.

The six-gabled, timber-framed corner house, now subdivided, and including Nos.4-6 Princes Street would originally have made one large mansion. The building has been altered over the years and most recently the upper floors have been completely restored and the end gable rebuilt

2 St Peter Hungate

For more information about the church, please see overleaf, and the enamel plaque on the railings. If you can make time to look inside and note the connection to the famous Paston family. Outside the north door is a carved stone, supposedly commemorating their rebuilding of the nave & transepts as 'a neat building of black flint' in 1460.

With your back to St Peter Hungate, turn left to walk along Princes Street.

3 Princes Street

The parish continues about 30m past the church along the left hand side of what used to be known as Prynce's Inn Lane. The Prince's Inn once sat on the parish boundary, the pub was recorded as early as 1391 and gives its name to Princes Street today. The other side of the road, including the United Reformed Church by Edward Boardman, is mainly in St Michael at Plea parish.

Turn back and head towards Elm Hill again.

4 Elm Hill

Return to the crossroads and turn right down Elm Hill. Beware of traffic, take care on the cobbles.

Whilst Elm Hill today runs from St Peter Hungate down to St Simon and St Jude on the corner of Wensum Street, it used to continue in a straight line past the Britons Arms. It was re-directed when St Andrew's and Blackfriars Halls were built in the 15th century. Elm Hill may date back to A.D.1200.

At the top of Elm Hill, opposite St Peter Hungate is Blackfriars Hall – stop to look at this building.

5 Blackfriars Hall

Standing with your back to the St Peter Hungate churchyard railings look up at the magnificent east end and window of Blackfriars Hall, the former chancel of the Dominican Friary church. When it was extended in 1307 this building was such an imposition on the parish that, following the demolitions of several houses, the Friars paid compensation to the parish for loss of tithes.

The centre of the parish today is the small plain at the junction of Elm Hill and Waggon & Horses Lane. With Princes St these form the whole parish – and the historical name 'Hungate' applied at various points to all three! The current name came from the elm trees, planted in the square by the churchwardens of St Peter Hungate in the 16th century.

Continue along Elm Hill.

Continue along Elm Hill.

6 Six Tenements (Nos 12, 14 and 16 Elm Hill)

There has been a building on this site from 1249. In 1493 it was owned by the Prior and Convent of Norwich Cathedral. The present buildings postdate the Elm Hill fire of 1507. The large, heavy oak studded door in the centre of the now three properties was the main entrance, an overhang or 'jetty' helped to increase space on the first floor.

It was a domestic property until c.1864 when an Anglican Churchman, the Rev. J. L. Lyne, the self-styled Father Ignatius (1837-1908), settled here and tried to revive a form of monasticism.

Walk down Monastery Court to the left of the building, passing the monastery Chapel of Father Ignatius on the right.



Image: St Peter Hungate

7 Monastery Court

At this point you can take an optional detour along the back of the buildings through Elm Hill Gardens. This will give you a good view of the buildings, and a sense of how they related to the quaysides behind.

Return to Elm Hill. Now take a closer look at some of the buildings which have shaped the character of this parish.

8 The Paston Family

Many famous and well-known people have lived in Elm Hill including the Paston family and sixteen mayors.

The street was popular with merchants. The river Wensum which runs parallel to the north side of Elm Hill allowed merchants to import raw materials and export their products via Great Yarmouth. Many wealthy merchants had houses facing Elm Hill with their factories, workshops and stores at the rear, sloping down to their own quays. The workers lived in these spaces in crowded tenements. Whilst Norwich continued as a thriving centre of the textile industry, Elm Hill remained popular. By the 19th century the weaving industry was in decline and Elm Hill lost its importance and prosperity.

9 The Bear Shop and the Strangers Club

Continue along Elm Hill to No.18 - The Bear Shop and Nos. 22-26 - the Strangers Club.

No. 18 was once home to the de Hague family. Father and son both acted as Town Clerk of Norwich, in 1774 and 1826 respectively.

Before the fire of 1507 a 14th-15th century house, 'Paston Place' belonging to the Paston family of the famous 'Paston Letters' stood on the site of the Strangers Club. Notice the blue plaque on the Strangers Club building.

The house standing on this site was built after the fire by Augustine Steward, a wealthy merchant, mayor and sheriff of Norwich. Look for his mark and the arms of the Mercers Company at the entrance to Crown Court Yard.

Notice the unusual twenty light ground floor window facing the street. Queen Elizabeth I is said to have watched a

pageant taking place on the street below during her five day visit to Norwich in 1578.

After its reconstruction in 1928, it became the Strangers Club. Formed by six local gentlemen with the purpose of entertaining 'strangers' visiting the city, they remain the occupants to this day.

The parish boundary crosses Elm Hill just below the Strangers Club. Turn round and return to the tree in the little square at the junction of Elm Hill and Waggon & Horses Lane.

10 Britons Arms

Finish your tour at what is certainly the most famous historic building in Elm Hill, and one of the most famous in the city – The Britons Arms.

Built into the corner of the original Churchyard, in 1347 this building was known as 'le Goddes hous'. Home to a small group of devout and chaste women who lived communally, this may have been similar to a *Beguinage*, as found in the Low Countries, one of only two examples in Britain, both in East Anglia.

At the end of the 15th century the building was home to 'Barbours' or surgeons and was later associated with cordwaining and saddlery. In 1760 the building became an Ale House called the 'Kings Arms'. In 1804 it became the 'Britons Arms'. It continued as a public house until 1941 but closed during the war. After WWII, the owners of the property, a well-known local brewery, sold the building to the Norwich Corporation for only £10! Now a popular coffee house and restaurant, the Britons Arms was restored in 1984, and again in 2015/16.

This is the end of this trail but do look out for our other self-guided trails of the city's medieval churches.

Hungate is now a volunteer-run centre for sharing medieval art, and contemporary art which draws its inspiration from the medieval, with the public, and hosts one or two free public exhibitions every year. It is usually open at weekends from March-October. See www.hungate.org.uk for further details.



Front cover images of the Britons Arms and the Bear Shop kindly supplied by Hungate Medieval Art.

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This tour takes about 30 minutes to an hour or so, depending on how much time you spend at each stopping point, and whether or not you go inside any of the buildings. It encompasses two of the most picturesque historic streets of old Norwich, as well as sections of gardens and riverbank. The trail is different from others in this series; its theme is a single parish – one historic and contemporary community, focused around just one of Norwich's thirty-one medieval parish churches.

St Peter Hungate itself is a very special church. It was the first in the whole Church of England to be reused for a secular purpose, opening as The Museum of Ecclesiastical Art in 1932. Reuse was a revolutionary approach to preserving these buildings, and for that reason Hungate is a 'parent' of the eighteen other churches let out by Norwich Historic Churches Trust.

With this brief introduction to these churches it is hoped that you will want to return and spend more time enjoying the other medieval churches which grace our city. There is a wealth of information about the city's medieval churches and the treasures they contain in 'The Medieval Churches of Norwich' by Nicholas Groves, 'Medieval Norwich' edited by Carole Rawcliffe and Richard Wilson and, 'Women and Religion in Late Medieval Norwich' by Carole Hill.

These self-guided trails are published by the Norwich Historic Churches Trust. They are part of a special citywide cultural celebration and are designed to enable you to enjoy the city's medieval churches at your leisure.



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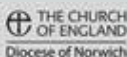
The Dean and Chapter of Norwich Cathedral; the Diocese of Norwich; The Medieval Parish Churches of Norwich Research Project (University of East Anglia) including The Leverhulme Trust, Norwich Research Park; Norwich City Council; Norfolk County Council; The Churches Conservation Trust, Norfolk Museums Service; The Norwich Society; Gildencraft Stone Masonry, the Friends of Norwich Historic Churches Trust and the tenants of all the churches in their care.

Norwich Historic Churches Trust

The Norwich Historic Churches Trust (NHCT) cares for eighteen Grade I listed medieval churches in the city that are no longer used for worship and have been deconsecrated. Established in 1973 it has found new uses for them and ensured their protection and maintenance. The churches managed by the NHCT are home to a number of major cultural activities including the Norwich Arts Centre, the Norwich Puppet Theatre, the Thalia Theatre Company and the Wharf Academy. If not open regularly for business, these churches are largely accessible during Heritage Open Days in September each year.

If you would like to know more about the churches managed by the Norwich Historic Churches Trust, whether it be taking on a tenancy of a church, gaining access to one or just finding out more about our buildings please contact the Administrator Stella Eglinton:
stella.eglinton@norwich-churches.org
or Tel: (01603) 611530

For further information about the history of our churches, the people associated with them and the monuments they contain visit: www.norwich-churches.org. To learn more about the activities of the Friends of Norwich Historic Churches go to: www.fnhct.org.uk



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