

St George Tombland, Norwich

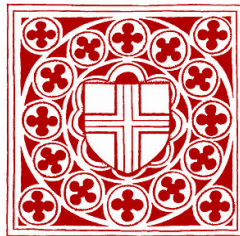


A New Guide

The Friends of St George Tombland



In pre-Reformation Norwich there were probably 63 churches. 31 are still standing - an unusually large number - but only eight are in use as parish churches. The purpose of this guide is to introduce visitors to a living church with a long history reflected in its many treasures.



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The Parish Church of St George Tombland, Norwich

A New Guide - 2020



The Story of St George's Church

The First Church

The first church on this site, of which nothing is visible, is thought to have been built about 1100, shortly after the Normans began work on Norwich Cathedral. Tombland (the name means 'empty space') had been Norwich's market place and at the centre of the Anglo-Saxon town. When the Normans made the unpopular decision to relocate the market to its present position, St George's encroached on Tombland for its own building.

Medieval Changes

A new church was constructed in the thirteenth century with a nave and chancel but no aisles. There are references to a tower, which might have been round. In 1272 tensions between the city and the cathedral, probably present since its foundation, broke out in damaging riots and according to Bartholomew Cotton, a cathedral monk, 'Some citizens launched fiery missiles from the tower of the parish church of St George [at Tombland] into the great-belfry situated beyond the [cathedral] choir'.

In common with other Norwich churches, major changes were made in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The north porch was added in 1445, a year when several legacies are recorded for building the present tower. The north aisle was added next and at the end of the century the south aisle and south porch. Then in the sixteenth century both nave and chancel received brick clerestories. In the late medieval period market stalls were set up in the eastern churchyard. These later became permanent shops which can still be seen facing Tombland and very near to St George's east window.

Later History

The rich medieval furnishings and glass were lost during the Reformation and the walls painted white. New galleries were built in the seventeenth century. The church gained box pews and its eighteenth-century reredos (one of the few to survive): it was painted with the Commandments, Creed and Lord's Prayer in gold leaf.

Between 1879 and 1886 major restoration work by Ewan Christian included renewing the sixteenth-century nave and chancel roofs (carved angels were added to the latter), removing the galleries and replacing the pews with benches. After the appointment of the Revd Walter Crewe in 1895, the interior was rearranged for a more ceremonial style of worship, which continues today.

Major work in 2013 and 2015 involved refurbishing the clerestory windows and replacing the outer brickwork. The south porch and south-west window were restored. Tie bars were installed, and new corbels support the nave roof.

A Tour of the Church Interior

The Nave and Tower

The nave arcades with octagonal pillars are plain for the late Gothic period. Probably because there is no local free stone, they were constructed from brick which has been plastered over. The west arch of the south arcade is of stone and of an earlier date: the priest's door was here before the south aisle was built. Unusually, the pillars are out of alignment. This is because there was originally a rood screen running across both the chancel and the north aisle. The northern arcade had to be set further west so that a larger eastern column could accommodate a door above the capital linking the two parts of the screen. In medieval times there was a gallery in the tower, containing a chapel dedicated to Our Lady in the Steeple. It was removed during the late Victorian restoration.

In 2013 it was discovered that the wooden corbels supporting the nineteenth-century nave roof were rotten. These have now been renewed in stone.

Symonds Monument and Bread Table

On the west wall before the font is the church's oldest surviving monument, to John and Olive Symonds. It dates from 1609 and originally had an architectural surround. John was a merchant taylor who became Sheriff of Norwich and is shown wearing his alderman's scarlet gown.

By his will, as recorded in the inscription, the sum of two shillings per week was left to the poor in perpetuity. Until at least 1891 this was handed out to the poor in the form of bread or dole from the table below. The money is now part of Norwich Consolidated Charities.

Prior to the formation of municipal fire brigades, fire-fighting equipment was stored in the area to the left of the monument.



Font

The octagonal Purbeck marble font dates back to the thirteenth century and is the oldest object in St George's. The font cover is probably seventeenth century: it features an openwork obelisk in Jacobean style and is surmounted by a Baroque statuette of St George on horseback. Two significant baptisms here were those of the playwright Robert Greene (1558) and John Crome - the artist known as 'Old Crome' - in 1768.

The Tower Bells

There are six bells, which can be chimed from a frame. The clock is inscribed *The gift of Charles Maltby to the parish of St George Tombland 1786*. It was made locally by Joseph Christian. The Friends of St George Tombland restored the clock in 2008, and it can now chime the hours.

North Aisle

The kitchen facilities, installed in 2008, were commended in the historic buildings category of Norwich Society's 2009 Design Awards. Above can be seen Snap, the civic dragon, when he is not away on official duties. He is accompanied by Marshall Neigh, a modern addition to the Lord Mayor's procession.





The Guild of St George was founded in Norwich during the fourteenth century to observe St George's Day, April 23, with a procession, brought to life by Snap the dragon. The Guild was a wealthy and powerful influence in Norwich with close links to the city authorities. In the late sixteenth century Guild Day was combined with the swearing-in of the new Mayor. Snap continued to feature until 1850. The tradition was revived in 1997. On the north wall is a painted oak relief (*below*) of St George, dating from 1530-50, and believed to be North German or Flemish.



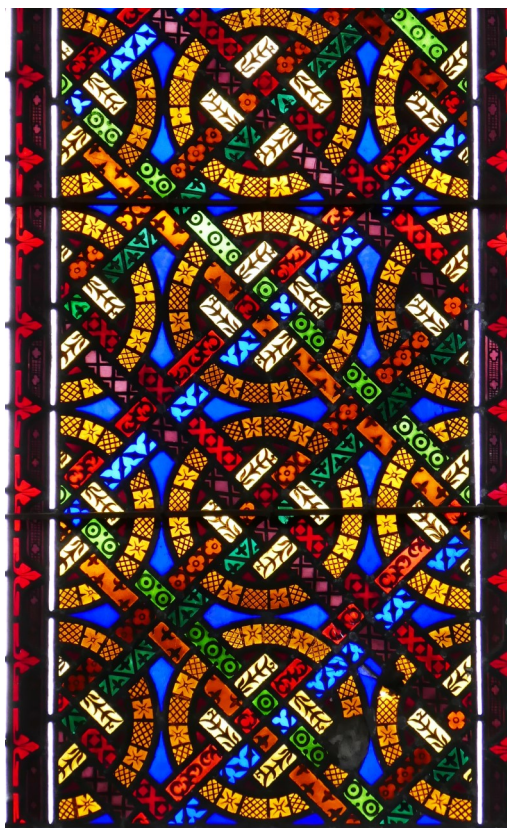


The mosaic stained glass in the larger north aisle windows dates from 1867. Their unusual design reflects the local weaving industry. (*Pictured opposite*)

The small windows are of 16th/17th Century Flemish glass and relate two incidents in the story of Tobit. On the left he is blinded by sparrows; on the right his sight is restored by his son Tobias, with the guidance of the Archangel Raphael.

The painting of the Angel of the Annunciation is in a Renaissance style and has been put in an elaborate wooden frame. There would normally be a companion painting depicting the Virgin Mary.

At the east end of the north aisle is the Lady Chapel. Its altar table was formerly the high altar in St Simon and Jude, which closed when its parish was united with St George's in 1894. The canopy comes from All Saints on All Saints Green, again no longer functioning as a church.



*Tobit's sight being restored
by his son Tobias*

South Aisle

Pulpit

The finely carved oak pulpit with ivory inlay is believed to be seventeenth century and French. Its unusually large tester (sound board) is not the original. It began life as a three-decker pulpit but was converted in 1886.



The Windows

The two large stained-glass windows are memorials to a father and daughter.

In the south wall the window depicting (from left to right) St Edmund, St Luke and St George dates from c.1907. It commemorates Charles Williams, a surgeon and scholar (he became an expert on Sir Thomas Browne) who worshipped in the church for forty years. Appropriately, St Luke is not portrayed with his evangelist's symbol, an ox, but with a superscription reading 'St Luke the devout physician'.



The window at the east end of the south aisle depicting the Magnificat is a memorial to Agatha, one of Charles Williams' five daughters. It is in the Arts and Crafts tradition and was erected by the William Morris studio in 1937. The angels are probably Burne Jones designs. Use of white glass and vivid ruby gold is typical of the studio.

Set into the other south window are two medieval roundels. One shows a man rushing indoors from a shower and depicts April from a series about Labours of the Months.



The Chancel Arch

The arch appears to have been cut back, probably to reflect the sixteenth-century fashion for hall churches.

The eagle lectern was given to St George's in 1910.

The striking hanging crucifix, in the style of Comper, commemorates Walter Crewe (d.1920).

There is a small painted figure of St George on the pillar to the left of the chancel arch. This is a copy of Donatello's marble statue of 1415-16 in Florence.





The Chancel

The roof with its supporting angels dates from the late Victorian restoration. The angels carry emblems including the shield of St George and instruments of the Passion.

North Side

Shield of St George
Harp
Arms of Norwich Diocese
Organ
Cross
Hammer & Nails

South Side

Shield of St George
Hand raised in blessing
Ladder
Crown of Thorns
Scourges
Hands joined in prayer





The oak reredos goes back to the eighteenth-century church with box pews and galleries. Behind the brocade covering the central panels are the Ten Commandments in gold letters on blue. The Creed and Lord's Prayer are just visible beneath the varnish on the side panels. Though altered, the altar table dates back to the seventeenth century, as do the altar rails.

The Organ

The present instrument, located in the original Lady Chapel, is Victorian but has two eighteenth-century stops. It was given to the church in 1888.

The Windows

The Nativity window at the east end (1899), by C C Powell, was given in memory of Marianne Holley, strongly associated with the Sunday School.

The stained-glass window on the south wall commemorates the Revd Kirby Trimmer (Vicar, 1842-1887) and two of his sisters. It is by Clayton and Bell.



The Monuments

Thomas Anguish

By the side of the organ and to the right is the most important monument in the church. It is to Thomas Anguish (1536-1617) and by Nicholas Stone, the leading mason-sculptor of his era – he carved the monument to John Donne in St Paul's Cathedral. Anguish was a prosperous grocer and elected Mayor in 1611. He bequeathed a property in Fishergate 'for the keeping and bringing up and teaching of very poor children'. This became the Blue Coat Hospital, a charity that still exists. This is the last in a sequence of Norwich memorials where the Mayor is shown in his civic robes kneeling at a prayer desk opposite his wife. The couple's many children are also depicted.



Mary Gardiner

In the eighteenth century St George's chancel was a favoured place for erecting elaborate memorials to leading Norwich citizens – aldermen, merchants and lawyers - several of whom are buried beneath the chancel floor, a very prestigious location. The finest monument is to Mary Gardiner (east end of north wall). She died in 1748 aged 35. It was carved by Peter Scheemakers, a prolific sculptor and much in demand. He was responsible for the Shakespeare monument in Westminster Abbey. The Gardiner memorial reflects Scheemakers's studies in Rome: a cherub watches over Mary and draws a veil over her face. The silver-gilt communion plate given by Mary and her husband Stephen to the church is displayed in the Cathedral Treasury.

Above the door to the vestry in the north wall is a monument to William Clarke (1687-1752) by John Ivory, nephew of the local architect Thomas Ivory. It features scrolled brackets, a pyramid, an urn and the sculptor's trademark, a rosette. Clarke was a weaver; he was Mayor of Norwich in 1739.

The monument on the south wall depicting an obelisk and three cherubs is to four members of the Maltby family. The fourth son of George Maltby (1730/1-94) and his wife Mary became Bishop of Durham and was described as 'remarkably maladroit' by Queen Victoria after he presented the orb at the wrong moment during her coronation.



The Church Exterior

The South Porch

Before this porch was built entrance to the church was on the northern side, and the priest's door was here on the south. The east and west walls of the porch are original, but its front dates from the 1880s. Inside the porch is a late fifteenth-century rib vault with tiercerons and fine carved bosses. St George and the dragon are depicted on the central boss, and a Green Man can be seen to his right. Very possibly stonemasons working on the new nave vault in Norwich Cathedral were responsible.

The Clerestorys

On both the north and south nave walls brick facings were used during construction in the sixteenth century. These were replaced in the nineteenth century and again in 2013.

Tombland Alley

This alleyway runs through the north churchyard and through a passageway under the medieval Augustine Steward house. It is part of the great east-west route through the city, dating back to Roman times.



The North Porch



On Sunday 17 February 2019 a special service of celebration was held to mark the re-opening of the North Porch with new doors to provide level access to the church. This was a project planned and discussed for many years. The picture above shows the Very Reverend Jane Hedges, Dean of Norwich Cathedral, blessing the doors with holy water. To the right is Father John Minns, Priest-in-Charge 1991-2018, and to the left Father Alaric Lewis, Rector from 2018. Also shown are the builder, Ashley Banester, on the far left, and the architect, David Bonner.

The North Porch before refurbishment and installation of new doors





The Victorian Church interior

Three Notable Incumbents of St George Tombland

William Bridge

Licensed as Curate and Lecturer at St George's in 1632, William Bridge was an outspoken Puritan. His sermons attracted such large crowds that an extra gallery had to be erected over the communion table to accommodate them. One three-hour sermon on Sunday sports (that is dancing) led to his being chased from the church. His tenure at St George's was short: he was soon in trouble when the new Bishop, Matthew Wren, launched a campaign against nonconformity and was excommunicated for his dissenting views, which included the abolition of bishops. He fled to Rotterdam in 1636 but returned five years later and in 1642 became Town Preacher at Yarmouth. He also became a prominent speaker in London and published many of his sermons. At this time he set up a second congregation in Norwich, meeting in St George's until he was ejected again following the Restoration. At the end of 1667 he returned to Yarmouth and exhorted large audiences to oppose the established church, but a year later he was evicted from the town by Lord Townshend. Bridge retired to Clapham, where he died on 12 March 1671, aged 70.

Kirby Trimmer

Kirby Trimmer was Perpetual Curate from 1842 until shortly before his death in 1887. A man of wide scholarship, he clearly took very seriously his duties as preacher and pastor. He was also a meticulous and untiring botanist. His *Flora of Norfolk* (1866) is extraordinary in its detail on where specific plants were found, and he left a manuscript, 'List of fungi met with in East Norfolk, 1842-72', now in the County Record Office. He was buried in Crostwick, but a stained-glass window in the Chancel of St George's is dedicated to Kirby Trimmer and two of his sisters, Eliza and Julia, to whom he was very close.

Walter Crewe

Walter Crewe came to St George's in 1895 from the recently built Church of the Ascension in Lavender Hill (consecrated in 1883) where he was curate. This church is a large ark-like building, and its architect, James Brooks, designed it to fit the ritualistic style of late Victorian Anglo-Catholicism. Crewe established a similar ceremonial tradition here during his 25 year ministry, and his legacy continues both in the appearance of the church interior and St George's form of worship.

GLOSSARY

Aisle - originally used to mean an extension built on the side of the **nave** to increase the size of a church, it is now applied more generally to indicate the divisions of the building, often marked by an **arcade**.

Altar - sometimes called the Communion Table - this is a table of wood or stone on which **Holy Communion** is celebrated. Within a church there may be a main altar - the High Altar - and a number of smaller side altars. The High Altar at St George's is at the east end of the church in the **sanctuary** - it is a wooden table which has had a Medieval altar stone inserted into it.

Arcade - a range or row of arches supported on pillars which divide the **nave** from the side **aisles**

Aumbrey - this serves the same purpose as a **tabernacle** but is in the form of a 'wall safe'.

Bible - the Christian holy book. It is formed of two parts - the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament tells the history of God's people and foretells the coming of a Messiah (someone to save the people from their current situation). In the first four books of the New Testament (called Gospels) we read the stories of Jesus, who Christians believe to be that Messiah. The remainder of the New Testament includes letters and writings from major people in the early church which serve to teach and guide Christians in their lives.

Candles - these have been used in the church from very early times - initially maybe for purely practical reasons. Early Christians met in houses and catacombs (underground places of safety) where light was needed. Over time candles have taken on more symbolic meanings. They represent Jesus, who is described as the Light of the World in the **Bible**; they bring spiritual light into the dark places of life; they are symbols of prayer. Prayer or votive candles are often lit in front of pictures or statues. To 'light a candle for someone' is a visible sign of saying a prayer for them or ourselves. The candle symbolises that prayer - a light shining in the darkness which continues to burn well after it has been lit and the person saying the prayer has gone.

Chancel - the east end of the church beyond the arch. Originally it was separated from the **nave** by a screen. Within the chancel are the choir stalls, together with seats for the clergy, other ministers and servers (those who help during a service). The organ can also be found in this part of the church.

Chancel Arch - this marks the division between the **nave** and the chancel.

Clerestory - the upper part of the nave wall containing windows to let light into the **nave**

Colours - the church uses various colours to signify and emphasise different times of the year and services. Green, the colour of nature, is used for normal Sundays and days. Gold or White, a joyous and celebratory colour, is used on high days and holidays such as Easter, Christmas, Ascension and some saints' days. Purple, a more sombre and regal colour, represents both preparation and sorrow and is used during Advent (the time before Christmas when we prepare for the coming of Jesus) and Lent (the time before Easter when we look at ourselves and see how we can improve our Christian way of life). Red, a vibrant colour, is the colour of fire which represents the Holy Spirit and the colour of the blood shed by some of the saints who were killed for their faith.

Creed - a statement of the Christian faith and what we believe. The word Creed comes from the opening word *Credo*, Latin for 'I believe'.

Eucharist - see **Holy Communion**

Font - a large stone bowl on a base and contains holy water. It is where babies and older people are baptised (Christened) and so become new members of the Christian Church - this is why the font is often found at the back of the church near the entrance.

Gradines - shelves for candles and flowers to the rear and above an **altar**

Holy Communion - sometimes called the Mass or Holy Eucharist (meaning thanksgiving). Holy Communion is one of the main services of the church and is in two parts. During the first part we prepare ourselves by acknowledging before God our failings and receiving his forgiveness. We hear readings from the **Bible**, listen to these explained in the **sermon** or **homily**, and summarise what we believe in the **Creed**. During the second part the priest blesses and consecrates (makes holy) bread and wine which are received by the congregation by coming to the altar rail. This is done in memory of Jesus's last meal (the Last Supper) which he held with his twelve disciples (followers and close friends) on the night before he died. He commanded his disciples to share the bread and wine in remembrance of him and we continue to do so.

Homily - see **Sermon**

Lectern - a reading desk from which passages of the **Bible** are read. It is often made of brass or wood in the shape of an eagle. The eagle is the symbol of St John the Evangelist, who wrote one of the Gospels. The eagle sometimes stands on a ball representing the world while the Bible on the eagle's back and wings symbolises the Word of God being carried to the corners of the earth

Lord's Prayer (The) - the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples when they asked him how they should pray. It is also known as the Our Father. In the prayer we bless God and pray for our world, our communities and our lives to be shaped by God's will. We pray for daily needs to be met. We pray for forgiveness for wrongdoings, strength to resist temptation and protection from danger.

In the traditional form the words of the Lord's Prayer are:

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*

Nave - the main body of the church with **pews** or chairs for the congregation. Nave comes from the Latin *navis* for ship and describes both the church as it carries its members on their pilgrimage through the storms of life and also the shape of the roof with its beams resembling the shape of an upturned ship's hull.

Pews - wooden seats or benches for the congregation in the **nave** and **aisles**

Pulpit - an enclosed platform from which the sermon is preached. It sometimes has a canopy above it acting as a sounding board and is often entered via steps or stairs.

Reredos - an ornamental screen covering the wall at the back of an **altar** which can contain paintings and sculpture. Many of these date back to Medieval times. Our reredos is from the early eighteenth century and was originally painted with the words of the **Ten Commandments**, the **Lord's Prayer** (Our Father), and the **Creed**. The Ten Commandments are still behind the gold brocade panels above the altar. However, the Lord's Prayer and the Creed have been painted over, although faint outlines of the words can be seen in the two black panels either side of the altar

Sanctuary - from the Latin *sanctus* meaning holy. This is the most holy part of the church where the **altar** is located. It is often at the east end of the **Chancel** and separated from it, as here in St George's by an altar rail. The rail serves two purposes. It ensures this area is kept set aside as a holy place and it helps those attending **Holy Communion** to kneel and receive the bread and wine.

Sermon - this is in itself an act of worship rooted in the Scripture readings read during the service and aims to apply those readings to our lives today, morally, practically and spiritually. A Homily is similar but shorter and informal.

Tabernacle - a locked and covered 'cabinet or safe' built into the **gradines** at the back and above the **altar**. The tabernacle contains reserved consecrated bread which is used by priests and other authorised ministers for taking **Holy Communion** to the sick or housebound. There is usually a white light burning on or near the tabernacle to signify the presence of Jesus in the form of the consecrated bread. See **Aumbrey**.

The Ten Commandments - a set of rules given to Moses by God on the top of Mount Sinai. They can be found in Chapter 20 of the Book of Exodus in the Old Testament of the **Bible**. They set out how we are to treat God and how we are to treat our fellow human beings - for centuries they have been the basis for many moral codes.

A shortened version of the Ten Commandments is:

I am the Lord your God; have no other gods but me.

You shall not make for yourself any idol.

You shall not dishonour the name of the Lord your God.

Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.

Honour your father and your mother.

You shall not commit murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness.

You shall not covet.

Jesus later summed these up by saying we are to love God with all our heart, our mind, our soul and our strength (the first four commandments); and to love our neighbours as we love ourselves (the final six commandments).

Among those who helped with the preparation of this guide were: David Bussey, Peter Callan, Derrick Dack, Paul Dennis, Maggie and Eric Diffey, Helena Hudson, Kevin Mitchelson and Roger Simpson.

Texts consulted include: ed. Atherton, Fernie, Harper-Bill and Hassell Smith, Norwich Cathedral, 1996; N Greaves, ODNB (William Bridge); N Groves, The Parish Church of Saint George Tombland, 2009; N Groves, The Medieval Churches of the City of Norwich, 2010; Pevsner and Mitchell, The Buildings of England, Norfolk I: Norwich and North-East, 1997; Rawcliffe and Wilson, Medieval Norwich, 2004.

The Friends of St George Tombland

The Friends was set up in 1997 with two clear aims:

To help maintain the fabric and furnishings of a busy medieval city church;

To sustain its central role as a place of Christian worship.

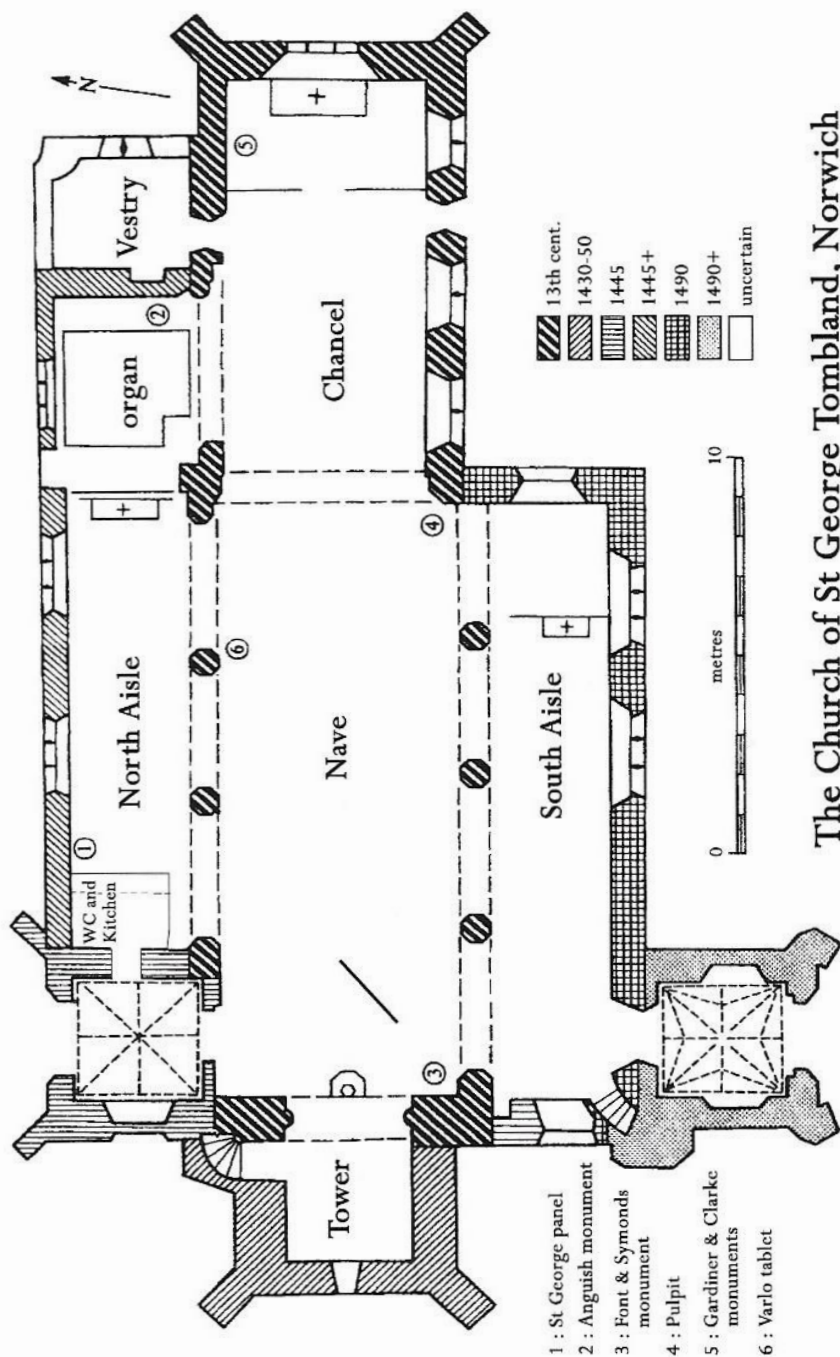
Most of the congregation are Friends, and many others choose to join because they live or work locally, or simply because they have an interest in supporting St George's.

There are three newsletters each year and a programme of events is arranged, including talks, walks and meals.

Since the foundation of the Friends, many essential gifts to the church of St George's have been made, including kneelers, vestments, repairs to the tower clock, a sound system and a new laser printer. A very significant contribution was made to the recent major restoration programme.

Further details about the Friends and how to join are contained in a separate leaflet. You can also find an application form on the church website, or write to:

The Hon. Treasurer
Friends of St George Tombland
St George's Church
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Norwich, NR3 1AF



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