

Welcome to the...

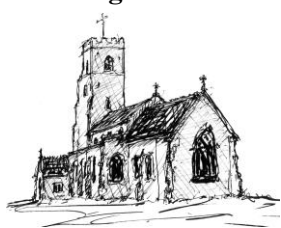


~ Church Trail ~



Our six Church of England parish churches in the heart of north Norfolk, are found north-east of the market town of Fakenham, located either side of the main Holt Road, and adjacent to the historic pilgrimage destination of Walsingham to the north-west. The ‘benefice’ group name, the **Way-Marker**, references the pilgrim signposts on the Norwich to Walsingham Way, a route that was established in 2016. This brief overview gives a simple introduction to each church. Our benefice sees pilgrims from several diverse directions treading our lanes as they head towards Walsingham. Our churches are open daily as a welcome to visitors. They are essentially medieval and listed either Grade 1 or 2*. Each presents a tranquil sacred space for pilgrims on the journey of life.

Hindringham - St Martin's



This church commands an elevated position on an area of raised ground at the northern end of the main street. The chancel—east end of the church housing the altar—is ‘on the hup’ in Norfolk-speak, meaning slightly askew, in relation to the nave, the main body of the church. Some traditions claim that this illustrates the head of Jesus fallen to one side on the cross. A plainer explanation might be that a subsequent rebuilding of the nave set it more precisely in line with east. All old churches traditionally face east, as Jesus indicated that his return would be like a light from the east (Matthew 24:27), and sunrise being a symbol of resurrection, and simply that ‘the Holy Land’ is eastwards from western Europe. The church includes a striking and detailed Victorian east window, and fragments of medieval stained glass in the south ‘aisle’ east window.

Thursford - St Andrew's



The medieval tower remains much as it was, with the body of the church a Victorian rebuild. The church includes some distinctive Victorian windows in the chancel and a modern community-funded and locally made window in the Chad Chapel, up the steps on the south side. The church fellowship prides itself in offering a community-friendly space, hosting regular coffee mornings, with flexibility in the arrangement of seating and tables and with a kitchen area for catering. Thursford Green, the west end of the village, is home to the renowned Thursford Collection and its hugely popular *Christmas Spectacular* variety show that attracts thousands of visitors in the weeks leading to Christmas.

Barney - St Mary's



There is an elegant simplicity to this church inviting a stillness and calm reflection at the midway point just off this quiet village's long main street. It features some historic painted carved faces and motifs in the roof that survived the Reformation. There are small panels of Victorian stained glass in the tracery of the east window. The church tower faces west from quite a prominent position and when caught by the sun, can be picked out from the other side of Fakenham, several miles away. Immediately to the south of Barney is the parish of Fulmodeston, which was formerly part of our benefice but is now linked with Fakenham parish church.

Kettlestone with Pensthorpe - All Saints



This church features a dainty octagonal tower, from early 1300s, one of only about half a dozen in Norfolk. The church offers a small-scale homeliness and simplicity. It sits a couple of hundred yards in, on the long village street, from the junction at the north end, past which runs the Walsingham Way pilgrim route

from Norwich. At the south end of the parish, on the main road from Fakenham to Norwich, lies the well-known Pensthorpe Natural Park and wildfowl reserve. Pensthorpe, long ago, had its own parish church—a little of the medieval wall can still be seen within the cafeteria there—but that community is now part of Kettlestone parish.

Little Snoring - St Andrew's



Despite its quaint name, this village has grown and now has the largest population in our benefice, about 600. It features the oldest church remains in the benefice, a Saxon round tower, which is a characteristic of Norfolk, about a millennium old. This one is curiously separate

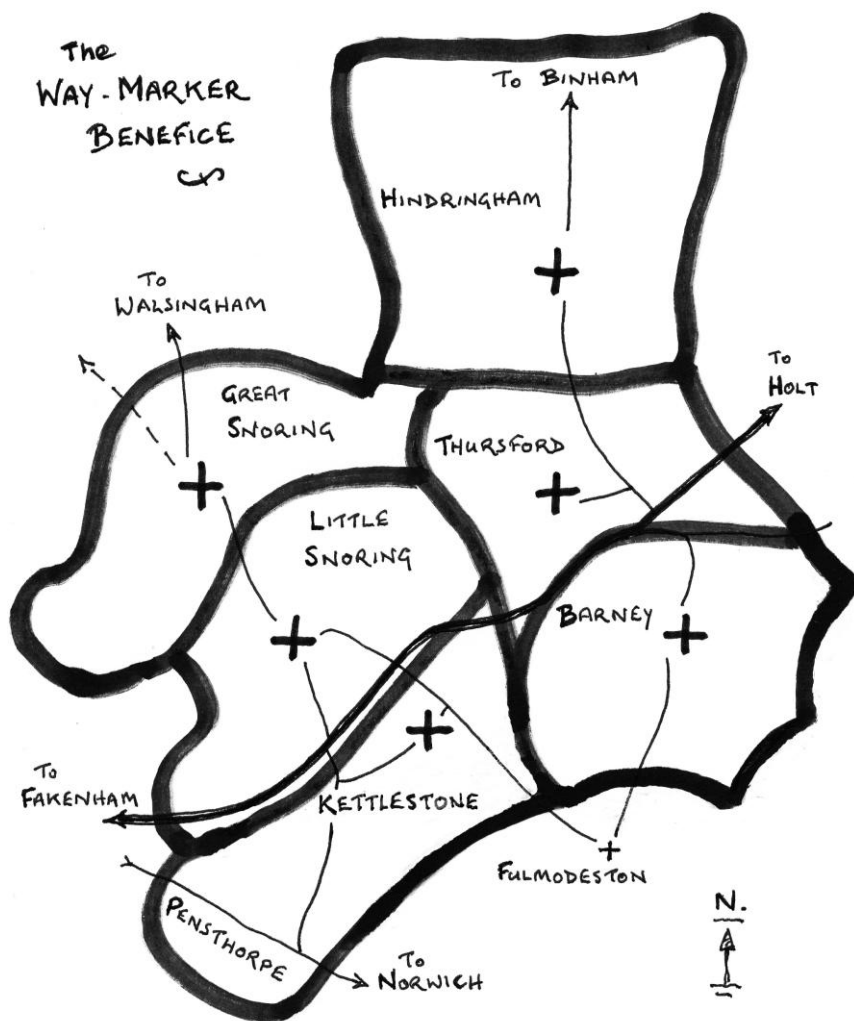
from the body of the church. There is speculation that the main body of the church was re-sited clear of boggy ground associated with the brook. During the Second World War the church was used as a chapel by aircrews of the adjacent Allies' air base. One of the crewmen created painted boards detailing the exploits of his comrades, which are displayed at the west end of the church interior.

Great Snoring - St Mary's



This is one of many local parish churches dedicated to 'Our Lady', the mother of Jesus, whose history represents a focal point at neighbouring Walsingham, as if inviting pilgrims to treat 'her' local churches as stopping points for prayer and devotion. Above the main door on the inside is depicted an enormous coat of arms apparently for James

II, late 1600s, but possibly with updated details from James I, at the beginning of that century. Opposite is an equally grand-scale Ten Commandments board. Remains of pre-Reformation rood screen panels—at the partition between nave and chancel—were uncovered only in the 20th century. And a 20th century feature is an unusual Marian statue standing at the east corner of the south aisle—the traditional Lady Chapel—created by Hilda Theobold, who was headmistress at the old village school. Some small medieval stained-glass panels remain in the chancel.



The Walsingham Way comes up from the south-east direction, beginning at Norwich Cathedral, and eventually winds through Fulmodeston, Kettlestone, and the two Snorings. The dashed line above indicates an ancient 'greenway' pedestrian bridle path on the last leg to Walsingham. Most of our churches offer a stamp for pilgrim 'passports'.

Text & illustrations Revd Robin Stapleford
~ 2025 ~