

Third Annual Church Crawl

Sixteen members enjoyed the third society's church crawl on the 2nd July.

We started off at the picturesque village of Heydon, used many times for major films. In the church we found medieval wall paintings, including the Three Living and the Three Dead. An unusual font presented itself, at the west end, in the form of a large tub. A memorial to the novelist, Baron Lytton stalls in the north aisle. He was also a poet and politician. He coined such phrases as: "the great unwashed", "the pen is mightier than the sword" and "it was a dark and stormy night". The tower demonstrates the use of galletting; a cunning device from medieval builders to prevent frost and damp damage.

After restorative coffee, and in some cases, cake we set off for Salle Church to view its beauty. It is unusual, as it was all built at the same time and virtually survives in that state (early 15th century). It was built by several wealthy families in the parish. We admired its angel roof, the carved medallions in the chancel, the painted base of the rood screen, some pre-Reformation text, seven sacrament font, carved misericords etc. Is Anne Boleyn buried here in the family vault? It was rumoured in the 19th century that her body was moved here from the Tower of London by her ladies-in-waiting.



Then, off to nearby Cawston; another church where no cost was spared in its building. Its double hammer-beam roof, complete with feathered angels, is one of the best in the country. We discussed the meaning of a wild man and a dragon in the spandrels of a piscina. Again more medieval wall paintings and the remains of a Doom painting. Three misericords survive complete with exquisite carvings. The remnants of medieval stained glass has been set at a low level in the south aisle. It is mainly of angels playing instruments. We observed several ears of corn, a sign of the Norwich School of stain glass makers.

After an excellent two-course lunch (£5.45) at the Bell Inn at Cawston we sped off to Booton. A church complete with towers, spires and crockets. The Revd. Whitwell Elwin was the rector of the church for 50 years from 1850. Elwin was the great grandson of Pocahontas. He virtually re-built the church with money donated to him by what he called, his "blessed girls". Inside is an impressive display of late Victorian stained glass featuring angels playing musical instruments, including a triangle and a trombone. The faces are said to depict, the reverend's blessed girls. Interestingly, Elwin's daughter married Edwin Lutyens. He described the church as "very naughty, but in the right spirit". However, in private he said he did not like it.

For a contrast the final church visited was at Bawdswell. This church had been destroyed in 1944. A Mosquito bomber, returning home from a raid on the Ruhr, iced up and crashed right into the church. It has the look of a New England church. Inside there is a west gallery and a modern three-decker pulpit. Small roundels of Flemish stained glass are inserted into the nave plain glass windows. John Betjeman described Bawdeswell Church as being in “ghastly good taste”.

All who came on the crawl wish for a repeat one next year.