Norfolk Church Towers of the Later Middle Ages

Volume 1 of 2

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Abstract

Between 1375 and 1540 around 200 new church towers were built at the west ends of parish churches in Norfolk. Of these, my research has identified 164 that are still standing. These have constituted the sample group that has been surveyed and studied. The fabric and form of the towers often expresses communal pride as well as piety and taste. The aim of the research has been to analyse these buildings in their historical context, not merely to classify them.

Their material forms have been examined and a comparative descriptive analysis has revealed that, broadly speaking, there are two homogenous groups. The smaller group consists of those towers whose designs show little innovation and whose patrons and builders were content to follow well-established forms. The other group displays significant ambition and innovation. The analysis reveals that the designers and patrons of these towers expressed their ambition and taste through the adoption of a wide range of models and prototypes. As a result, within the sample group there is a considerable diversity of aesthetic approaches and a wide range of architectural elements. This sheds light on the architectural design process in Norfolk in the late Middle Ages and also calls into question the usefulness of the prevailing modes of style classification for late medieval architecture in a local context.

An iconological analysis has placed the towers in a ritual context and suggested their use as grand entrances for liturgical processions. They were designed as entrances to the New Jerusalem, settings for Palm Sunday and Corpus Christi celebrations of the period and drew on appropriate prototypes to suggest this analogy.

Furthermore, they testify to the collaborative endeavour and organisational competence of their parish communities in a period when government at a national level was frequently dysfunctional.

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List of abbreviations

BL	British Library
Bodl.	Bodleian Library
NCC	Norwich Consistory Court wills
NCH	Norwich Archdeaconry Court wills
NFK	Norfolk Archdeaconry Court wills
NRO	Norfolk Record Office

Norfolk Church Towers of the Later Middle-Ages

Chapter 1. Introduction

Introduction

Standing near the Holt road about 12 miles north of Norwich one can turn through all points of the compass and see four tall church towers rising above the hedgerows and corn-fields, each between one and three miles distant. The towers of Cawston, Heydon, Salle and Wood Dalling (Plates 27, 63, 122, 160) still dominate the landscape more than five centuries after they were built, the only clues to the presence of their communities from afar. It is known that they were all under construction within forty years of each other, indeed given the time it took to complete the building of towers in most cases, it is probable that work was being carried out on at least three contemporaneously.[1] Yet superficially the only obvious similarities are their great size and the fact that none bears a spire. Documentary and heraldic evidence suggest that they were financed by different groups and classes of patron: Cawston seems to have been an aristocratic project, Salle the result of patronage by a group of benefactors made recently wealthy through trade and the changing economic circumstances that pertained after the Black Death, whereas Heydon and Wood Dalling were at least partly financed with gifts from ordinary members of the community, one – John Bulwer – donating sums towards the building of both towers.[2] In all cases these were grand local projects and one wonders at the strain put on local community resources by four such onerous works being carried out so near to each other, both in time and

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[1] At Salle, the beginning of the tower building campaign has been dated to 1405 – 1413 by arms on the tower. See Parsons, W.L.E., *Salle,* Norwich, 1937.
Will bequests suggest a long campaign at Wood Dalling. In 1422 40s. were left to building the tower, Thomas Dalling, NCC Hyrnyng 105, NRO; 1478 6d. William Selthe, NCC Gelour 205, NRO; 1486 20s. Roger Bulwer, NCC A Caston 265, NRO; 1488 £10 John Bulwer, NCC ACaston 327, NRO; 1502 6s.8d. Margery Crane, NCH Cooke 2, NRO; 1512 £5 Roger Bulwer, NCC Johnson 154, NRO. At Cawston "a great wind blew down the bell tower of Causton church" in 1412, see *Norfolk Archaeology* 30, p339, and in 1421 20s. were given to the reparation and emendation of the tower, John Thornham, NRO, Norwich Priory Acta and Comperta Rolls, Roll 3 m.Id. Will bequests indicate a slightly later date for Heydon: 1460 20 marks John Barker, NCC Betyns 77, NRO; 1469 10 marks Robert Dynne, NCC Jekkys 157, NRO; 1472 5 marks Richard Hokel, NCC Jekkys 274, NRO; 1474 20s. Katharine Becke, NCC Gelour 68, NRO; 1484 40s. Margaret Fekers, NCH Fuller 153, NRO; 1488 6s.8d. John Bulwer, NCC A Caston 327, NRO; 1488 12d. Robert Hendry, NCH Fuller 134, NRO; 1488 12d. Margaret Boydon, NCH Fuller 150, NRO.
[2] See John Bulwer above, note 1.

place. Patrons, designers and parishioners must have eyed each others' towers to gauge progress and compare technical and aesthetic solutions and it is interesting that in these circumstances four such different towers were created.

From 1375 until the break with Rome a century and a half later, about 200 new church towers were built in the county of Norfolk.[3] This was a period when many parish churches were being rebuilt or improved in East Anglia, at a time when the region was, on the whole, benefiting from a more prosperous economy than most other areas of Britain. The most obvious visual sign of this great rebuilding is the occurrence of so many new and dominant towers. Although not all are as grand as the four mentioned above, the Norfolk countryside is still characterised by the apparently ever-present, square-topped, late-medieval tower. This is a cultural phenomenon that has received little devoted scholarly attention, so it is the aim of this project, broadly speaking, to investigate the circumstances of the creation of the late-medieval towers of Norfolk as a group, both from an aesthetic as well as a historical point of view. It is a premise of this project that an approach that integrates consideration of the design choices made, the nature of the patronage, the practicalities of construction and the ideologies that may have affected the commissioning of towers can be a fruitful one, given that it seems reasonable to suppose that all these areas of investigation are interrelated in a cultural matrix.[4] It is intended that a close scrutiny of the material forms of the towers that constitute the group taken together with the documentary evidence relating to their construction and patronage will shed light on the commissioning process, on the choices available to their creators and on the ambitions and ideologies of the communities that supported their construction throughout the period to be studied. This approach is the result of a desire to engage with minor ecclesiastical architecture in a manner different from the rigidly taxonomical approach that has characterised almost all previous studies in this field.

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[3] At least 30 of these late medieval towers are now ruined. They are not included in the research sample for the purposes of this project.
[4] For a related approach to a single building, see Heslop,T.A., "Swaffham Parish Church: Community Building in Fifteenth-Century Norfolk", in *Medieval East Anglia,* Harper-Bill, C. (ed.), Woodbridge, 2005, pp246-271.

Very nearly all parish church towers built in the later medieval period in Norfolk (and throughout East Anglia) were designed without spires, although a few have later additions in the form of low pyramidal roofs or lanterns. The overwhelming majority were constructed at the west ends of their churches on the main east-west axis of the nave. This project will investigate the towers that fit this pattern, although, of course, other towers, spires and steeples will be considered in the wider art-historical context of the research. The chronological parameters that have been selected are 1375 to 1538: the Dissolution of the monasteries. The earlier date has been chosen because an examination of the documentary evidence reveals that the last quarter of the fourteenth century can be regarded as the starting point of a period in great growth in the construction of church towers. Before this period there are very few references to money left to tower building campaigns, whereas in subsequent decades bequests in extant wills indicate that donations were frequently made to such projects. This trend tallies with the surviving material evidence of the towers themselves.[5] (Fig.1)[6] The initiation of major church building projects almost totally ceased at the Dissolution.
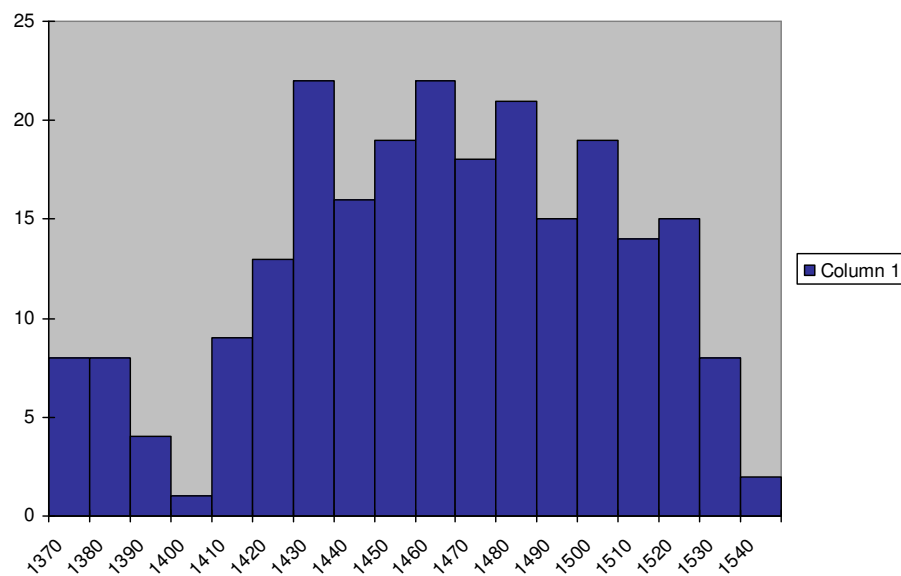
Fig. 1. Bequests to tower building campaigns (after Cattermole and Cotton)

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[5] A collection of the documentary evidence relating to parish church construction in Norfolk in the middle ages by Cattermole, P. and Cotton, S., "Norfolk Church Building", *Norfolk Archaeology* 38, pp.234-278, is an invaluable starting point for the student wishing to investigate Norfolk churches.
[6] This chart is based on an analysis of the findings published by Cattermole, P. and Cotton, S. in *Norfolk Archaeology* 38.

The county boundary of Norfolk has been set as the geographical parameter for two reasons. The first is that Norfolk contains a greater concentration of medieval churches than any other county in England, most with some late medieval work and many substantially rebuilt in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, nearly two hundred with new towers.[7] This provides a large, though manageable, sample to investigate, allowing trends of homogeneity or heterogeneity to emerge from analysis of the fieldwork data without fear of the imbalance that a smaller survey could show. The arbitrary nature of the boundary also helps to eliminate any tendency to focus on homogeneous groups of towers that may lead to false conclusions, particularly concerning questions of style, design and cultural transmission. Naturally, the consideration of church towers from neighbouring areas can shed much light on this research and where a Norfolk tower is part of a cognate group that straddles the county boundary this will be taken into account. It would be a significant error of omission to investigate the grand tower of Redenhall church (Plate 116) in the south of the county without considering those of Eye and Laxfield (Figs 2, 3) just across the border in Suffolk, for example. These three towers are most particular in their forms and decoration, all being lavishly covered with fine flint flushwork panelling of various designs, and supported by bold polygonal buttresses that wrap around the corners of the tower in much the same way that polygonal turrets function aesthetically on contemporary domestic and collegiate gatehouses.

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[7] Fawcett,R., "The Master Masons of Later Medieval Norfolk" in *A Festival of Norfolk Archaeology,* Hunstanton, 1996, pp101-126.

Fig. 2. Eye

Fig. 3. Laxfield

Likewise, the notably high incidence of especially tall towers on or near the coastline is considered in the context of similarly tall towers along the eastern coast generally, most famously in the case of Boston in Lincolnshire (Figs 4, 5).

Fig. 4. Boston
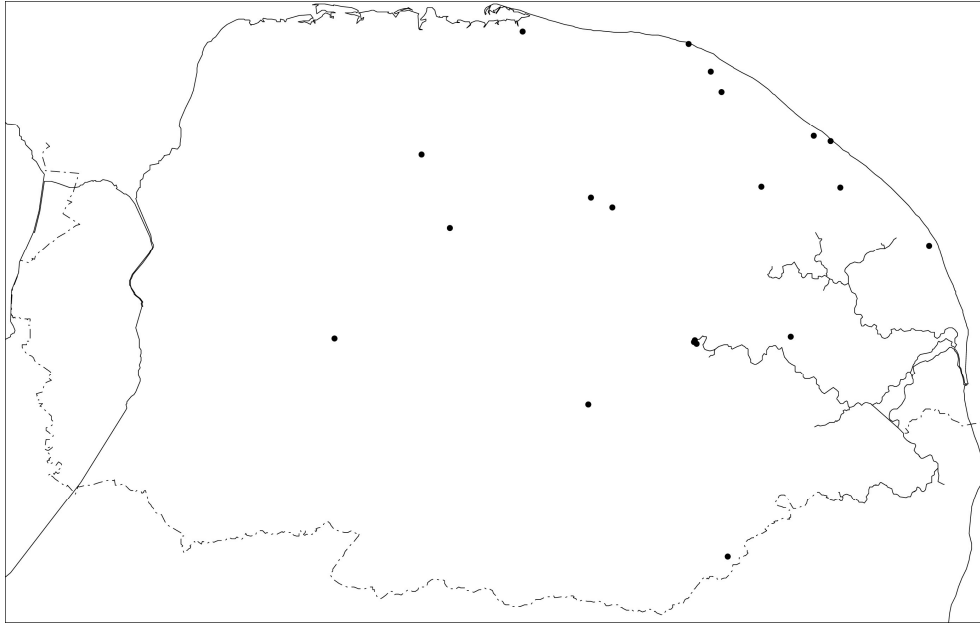
Fig. 5. Towers over 90 feet

Yet the geographical integrity of the group of towers to be subject to detailed, formal comparative analysis is preserved. Secondly, and happily for the student of Norfolk parish church architecture, the county preserves an outstanding wealth of documentation relating to the patronage and construction of churches, mainly in the form of surviving wills.[8] Although the research is concerned primarily with the material evidence of the towers themselves, the support of such abundant documentation is invaluable in piecing together a more complete picture of the circumstances of the creation of the towers. The results of the lack of such support can be seen in the case of the only other geographically defined study of late medieval church towers in England, which was bedevilled by a paucity of evidence regarding dating and patronage and which foundered on a number of erroneous suppositions as a consequence.[9]

Bequests in wills to specific building campaigns allow the researcher not only to give a date to towers, but also in some cases to specific phases of

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[8] See Cattermole and Cotton, note 4 above.
[9] Wright, P.P., *The Parish Church Towers of Somerset,* Avebury, 1981. See the critique of this Study in chapter 2 below and Harvey, J.H., "The Church Towers of Somerset" in *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society* 23-26, 1978-1982, pp157-183.

construction that can be identified from the material evidence. This can help in the investigation of the practicalities and difficulties of what were, on a local scale, often very ambitious projects. They also shed light on the nature of the patronage: the wealth, ambitions, tastes and concerns of the donor. The heraldry that frequently decorates church towers can help the researcher in similar ways. Taken as a whole this category of evidence, when integrated and cross-matched with the material evidence provided by fieldwork reveals patterns that illuminate the nature of the design and construction process and the choices available to and made by those who commissioned and designed the towers.

An analysis of the documentary evidence shows that about half of the bequests made to the fabric of parish churches in the period were directed towards the building of towers and this is often reflected in the material evidence; many impressive western towers appear to be of a quite different level of ambition from the churches to which they are attached. One only has to visit a church such as St. Mary's at Erpingham (Plate 40), which was built in a rather piecemeal fashion in the late fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries, to see how the attention and the resources were allocated in favour of the construction of the tower with the result that it completely dominates the rest of the church. Other churches, the results of more unified building campaigns, such as St. Botolph's at Trunch and St. Mary's at Ditchingham (Plates 143, 34), can similarly be dominated by imposing and ambitious west towers. Indeed it is rare to find examples of west towers built in this period that seem to be fully integrated into a more coherent whole; the aforementioned Saints Peter and Paul at Salle, built entirely in the first half of the fifteenth century, and the similarly dedicated parish church at Swaffham (Plate 137), largely built in the second half of the fifteenth century, are amongst the outstanding examples.

John Harvey, in his study of Perpendicular architecture, noted of this development that "a western…tower attached only at one side was a separate work of art allowing relatively free rein to the imagination."[10] It is not clear how free Harvey thinks this imagination could be and, indeed, whose imagination was being referred to, yet it is evident that tall church towers present a particular opportunity for the expression of a patron's or community's taste, ambition and

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[10] Harvey, J., *The Perpendicular Style, 1330-1485,* London, 1978, p226.

identity that could be projected over a greater area than was normal in other parts of a church. And here is one of the key questions that this research project attempts to address: to what extent is it the form or the function that defines the tower? While the tower can be seen as a discrete element, often at odds with the scale, materials or style of the rest of the church, it must also be considered as an integral part of the whole building, for it was presumably designed as such. The majority of towers of the period are integrated with the interior of the building through a tall tower arch that allows the nave to be lit by the west window in the tower, as well as by a processional route if the tower has a west portal. Relatively few towers built before 1375 have west doors and most do not have large west windows to light their naves; indeed towers built in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries often have little connection with the main vessel of the church other than a low and narrow opening that allows access to the tower and the ringing chamber from the nave. They were, in effect, designed as self-contained cells, appendages to churches, the sole entrances to which were through a lateral portal at the south-west or north-west corner of the nave and, for the clergy, through a priest's door in the chancel.

The preponderance of later towers with western portals and high tower arches begs questions about the additional functions of church towers that were developed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It is evident from the number of lavish porches, usually on the south side of the church, commissioned in the period in question, that western doors were not designed to replace lateral portals, but rather to supplement them; but porches are a separate research topic. Later chapters will investigate the architectural forms, heraldry and iconography of these towers and the entrances that they frame, in order to establish the different types of use to which they were put, and in particular to investigate the hypothesis that while lateral porches retained their perennial uses as day-to-day entrances and meeting places, west doors, opening directly on the main axis of the church, were used for more formal or processional occasions and were thus integrated into the liturgy, performance and ritual of the church. That western entrances were used, and on a predictable basis, seems evident for, as Paul Cattermole pointed out, there are a number of wooden galleries extant that seem to have been built to allow bell-ringers to vacate their former position on the ground floor of towers "because it was inconvenient for the bell-ringers to be

immediately behind any west doorway that was used for ceremonial entrance."[11] The will of Geoffrey Elyngham of Fersfield would seem to confirm this. He bequeathed money for the construction of a ringing gallery in 1493 for just such a purpose: "*Item volo quod executores mei fieri faciant unum solarium in campanili dicte ecclesie obsimile et instar solaria in campanili ecclesie de Estherlyng ut procession festivis diebus subter pulsantes procedat*."[12] Such galleries can still be seen at Mattishall, Trunch, Redenhall and Wheatacre among others, and the vestiges of doors that led from the main tower stair to a ringers' gallery survive in a number of other churches. Locally famous, the ringing gallery at Cawston still retains a faded inscription on its western beam, readable from the nave: "God spede the plow and send us ale corn enow our purpose for to make at crow of cok of the plow lete of Sygate: to be marry and glede wat good ale this work mad."[13] Aside from local speculation on the existence of a pun in the last part of the inscription (was Wat Goodale one of the benefactors?) this text raises a number of interesting lines of enquiry that are followed in a more general context in the body of the research: the reference in the inscription to church ales or guild ales as means of community fund-raising for construction projects;[14] the role of communal endeavour and parochial patronage; and the appropriation of a very public part of the church by individuals or prominent lay members of society – the inscription is on the main ceremonial east-west axis of the church and directly faces the high altar. Several studies of guild activity have been made, including studies investigating guilds in Norfolk and particular Norfolk parishes and these will be referred to in later chapters.[15]

Church towers in England have housed bells since well before the Norman Conquest.[16] As bells became heavier and more numerous in the later

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[11] Cattermole, P., *Church Bells and Bell Ringing: a Norfolk Profile,* Woodbridge, 1990, p66.

[12] NRO, Galfrid Ellingham, NCC Aubry 41, 1493.

[13] I believe that the word "ale" is here deliberately ambiguous, meaning both "all", but also "ale" in this very specific context.

[14] This aspect of medieval fund raising is investigated by Rosser, G., "Going to the Fraternity Feast: Commensality and Social Relations in Late Medieval England", in *The Journal of British Studies, Vol. 33, No.4,* 1944, pp430-446, and by Duffy, E., *The Voices of Morebath,* New Haven, 2001.

[15] Farnhill,K., "The Religious Gilds of Wymondham 1470-1550" in *Norfolk Archaeology 42,* 1993-1997, pp321-331; Hanawatt,B., "Keepers of the Lights: Late Medieval English Parish Gilds" in *The Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies 14,* 1984, pp26-37; Firth,C., "Village Gilds of Norfolk in the Fifteenth Century" in *Norfolk Archaeology 18,* 1914, pp161-208.

[16] There is a reference to bells being rung in the convent at Whitby on the death of St. Hilda, in Bede, *History of the English Church and People,* IV, 23.

Middle Ages and larger bell-frames were needed to accommodate them, new structural problems were posed as the stresses put on the walls of the bell chambers in the upper parts of towers increased.[17] Nevertheless, this functional aspect of church towers, as belfries, is clearly one that has remained largely constant. The development of bells and bell-ringing through the Middle Ages is less a question of function than of the technical problems of construction. My research does not engage with this aspect of late medieval Norfolk towers, as it is common to other periods and different types of tower.

Questions that address the function of church towers must be integrated with sociological, historical and theological contexts. As Willibald Sauerlander noted in an essay referring to cathedrals that called for a more integrated approach to the study of medieval architecture, the "integration of context is certainly the most difficult and delicate task for the art historian, because it cannot be based on the visual and physical evidence of the monuments themselves but presupposes a perspective from the outside, seeing the cathedrals as extraneous events in an urban, agricultural, feudal environment."[18] There is a danger that in bringing a great deal of historical context to the interpretation of cultural monuments the researcher runs the risk of being predisposed to draw false inferences, of trying to force the physical evidence to fit the contextual facts. In other words, circumstances can come to seem the determining factor. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that those who commissioned, built and beheld the towers lived in a cultural matrix of parish, village and manorial life, of guild membership, of religious processions and liturgy, of changing patterns of trade and agriculture, of Lollardy and orthodoxy; and it is inconceivable that this context had no effect on the circumstances of the construction of church towers. The researcher must try to reconstruct forensically the environment that would affect the choices open to patrons, designers and builders without presupposing their intentions from the available circumstantial evidence.

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[17] See Cattermole,P., op. cit., chapters 1 and 2.
[18] Sauerlander,W., "Integration: a Closed or Open Proposal?" in *Artistic Integration in Gothic Buildings* (Chieffo Raguin,V., Brush,K., Draper,P., eds.), Toronto, 1995, pp3-18.

A close and methodical study of the material forms of church towers can lead to a number of outcomes. Firstly there is the question of style and stylistic development. Secondly there is the interpretation of the iconography of the architecture and of the various motifs displayed on the towers. Lastly, there is evidence of the burden placed on the parish community by the construction, in the material that remains. At first, these seem discrete topics with little fertile ground shared between them, yet they can all be seen from the point of view of choice and constraint: the choices available to the creators of the towers and the constraints placed upon them at the time of construction. This is not an attempt to create a holistic view of local church architecture, an unreachable goal, but rather a more pragmatic attempt to investigate the architectural, historical and sociological circumstances that pertained at the time of construction that placed constraints and presented opportunities to any individual or community concerned with building such a significant local monument. Evidently, any such monument exists in both time and space and so the geographical and chronological perspective presented by research into a group of broadly similar edifices built over a century and a half in a large county such as Norfolk provides interesting insights into the changing nature of these opportunities and constraints.

<u>Style, design and attribution</u>.

An investigation of the material evidence allows a characterisation of church towers according to style and design. Much attention in this regard has already been paid to the earlier round towers of many Norfolk churches, probably because they are peculiar to East Anglia, with a few exceptions found in East Sussex and a number in northern Germany (Fig 6). They have excited a deal of speculation as to their origins and chronology and a number of learned articles and books have been written on the subject concerned in the main with typological classifications and attempts to place their construction either one side

or other of the Conquest, yet dealing less with the reasons for or the practicalities of their construction.[19]

Fig. 6. Hales

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[19] The latest of these is by Hart, S., *The Round Church Towers of England,* Ipswich, 2003; but see also Heywood, S.R., "The Round Towered Churches of Norfolk and Northern Europe" in *Norfolk Churches Trust Annual Report 1999/2000,* and Messent, C., *The Round Towers to English Parish Churches,* Norwich, 1958.

Whereas these towers have usually been seen in isolation from the buildings to which they are attached, discussion of later medieval church towers has generally been included within the wider framework of studies of local parish church architecture generally.[20]This has tended to take a taxonomical approach that has favoured the discussion of artistic attribution and has often resulted in a teleological view of stylistic development. This tendency to view changes in style, design and form backwards, along a linear path of development, necessarily diminishes the individuality of those people who were involved in the decision making. By imposing stylistic norms only drawn up hundreds of years after the events in question this taxonomic urge removes the concept of a range of models and opportunities from which the designers (patrons or masons) could choose. In the period in question, more or less contemporaneous with that defined in the nineteenth century as architecturally Perpendicular and further refined by John Harvey in his book *The Perpendicular Style, 1330 – 1485,* many ambitious churches and church towers were built in Norfolk that do not conform to a notion of stylistic consistency correlating to the forms classified as Perpendicular. Yet they were presumably seen as effective and desirable works by those who beheld and paid for them at and after the time of their construction.

This research presents an opportunity to examine the notion of stylistic development and cultural transmission through a close analysis of detailed architectural forms, such as the tracery of west windows, sound-holes and bell openings, the mouldings of door frames, plinths and tower arches, as well as large-scale forms such as the disposition of buttresses and the arrangement of tower stages and parapets. A seasoned observer of Norfolk church architecture could quite readily identify groups of towers with broad similarities: Happisburgh (Plate 60), Ingham (Plate 75) and Bacton (Plate 3) in the north-west of the county, for example. Although such cognate groups emerge through formal analysis, the object of the research is not to classify them according to type, but to identify the range of choices available to a designer of a tower at any particular time and to investigate the circumstances that influenced the choices made. In this regard heterogeneity may be just as significant as homogeneity.

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[20] The major contributor in this field in Norfolk has been Richard Fawcett, see in particular Fawcett, R., *Later Gothic Architecture in Norfolk,* unpublished Ph.D. thesis UEA, 1975; Fawcett, R., "The Master Masons of Later Medieval Norfolk" in *A Festival of Norfolk Archaeology,* 1996, pp 101-126.

The analysis that follows is based on the premise that a work focusing on classification is of limited value in helping to understand the processes which bring about cultural change. As can be appreciated from the problems encountered during research into the work of individual medieval architects by means of moulding and tracery analysis, as carried out, for example, by Richard Fawcett[21] and Eileen Roberts[22], the search for accurate dating and attribution of late medieval architecture, in the absence of unequivocal documentation, can be a complicated and frustrating business. As Roberts concluded, "The aim of moulding analysis is to cast light on medieval architects. It can, however, only be used to extend knowledge of the work of an architect documented in other ways".[23] Nevertheless the methodology that underpins such research can be very useful. Fawcett's and Roberts's studies are based upon the Morellian principle that "le bon dieu est dans le detail", that an architect, or master mason, reveals himself in the repeated use of small details, such as certain moulding profiles perhaps using the same template, that would be of little concern to a patron. My research is not concerned with attribution, so the minutiae of moulding profiles are not recorded systematically for every tower in the sample. However, by recording the same broad classes of architectural details and motifs on each church tower in the survey, from tracery patterns to the arrangement of buttresses and parapets, a database of material can be compiled that can be subjected to comparative analysis, that when supported by documentary, geographical and chronological evidence reveals patterns of formal choices available to tower designers. This in turn allows an interpretation of the process of cultural change and transmission that the designers effected.

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[21] Fawcett, R., op. cit. 1975.
[22] Roberts, E., "Moulding Analysis and Architectural Research; the Late Middle Ages" in *Architectural History 20,* 1977.
[23] Roberts, 1977, p 10.

Iconography: religious and heraldic motifs; materials.

Similar methodology and analysis can be applied to the sculptural decoration, whether sacred or secular, that decorates the towers. Heraldic, geometric and religious motifs are commonly found around west doors, whether in spandrels, lateral niches or in friezes above the hoodmoulds; around the base course or plinth; and on the parapets of the towers (Plates 91a, 40a, 98a) They are usually in low relief carved in panels of freestone, or in the form of decoratively shaped flints, termed flint flushwork. Indeed the choice and manipulation of materials for the surface of the towers falls within this area of investigation, particularly the development in the use of flint to create a visual impact. One question that is addressed by this analysis is the continued preference for the use of flint as a surface material when much domestic architecture had already started using brick for its surface finish.[24] An interpretation of these symbols and materials is again based on a similar attempt to understand the circumstances in which they were chosen to decorate specific towers. A comparative analysis of the data derived from the fieldwork is again used as the basis of the interpretation. Any such analysis must engage with current and historical thinking on the interpretation of the iconography of architecture and architectural imagery and this is attempted in Chapter 4 of the thesis.[25] It remains to be said at this point, however, that much writing on this subject is bedevilled by the problematic idea of buildings as bearers of meaning. It seems illogical to maintain that a building can "mean" anything or that it can bear meaning. There is no doubt that when patrons and architects designed a tower they intended its appearance, including both its form and its symbolic decoration, to convey certain values or even ideologies. They may have wanted to show the latest notions of taste, or to advertise their munificence and generosity, communal identity, piety or an appeal to commemoration. It is equally evident that the minds of these designers can never be known with certainty in the absence of documented records of intention and

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[24] Only one church tower under investigation, Wheatacre, has brick as its surface material. This despite many church towers, by the end of the period in question, using brick as their main structural material. For an increased interest in flint as a building material in the Middle Ages see Hart, S., *Flint Architecture of East Anglia,* London, 2000; Blatchly, J., and Northeast, P., *Decoding Flint Flushwork on Suffolk and Norfolk Churches,* Ipswich, 2005.

[25] For a summary of much of the earlier debate see Crossley, P., "Medieval Architecture and Meaning: the Limits of Iconography" in *The Burlington Magazine 130,* 1988, pp 116-122.

even they would be of limited value. So the researcher must try to identify patterns of use and from these recreate the situations or contexts in which certain motifs or forms were employed. Some are easier to understand than others, of course; the use of patronal symbols is not difficult to interpret, for example. There are more complex issues: contemporary ideas about metaphor and interpretation are harder to grasp. The medieval metaphor of a church as the Heavenly Jerusalem begs questions about the connotations that church towers may have had for contemporary onlookers, especially if the tower framed a grand ceremonial entrance. There is some help from medieval sources, particularly William Durandus who, in his *Rationale divinorum officiorum* written in 1286, compares church towers to "the preachers and prelates of the church which are her bulwark and defence", and later, "the pinnacles of the towers signify the life or the mind of a prelate which aspireth heavenwards".[26] His treatise was popular enough to have exercised some influence in ecclesiastical circles, at least. This project, though, does not seek to find a synthetic solution to the iconography of towers and their decoration, but to examine particular forms and sets of forms and to try and divine individual solutions to problems of choice, through the repetition of known forms or by adaptation or even innovation. This approach reflects that of Aby Warburg who treated the detailed and the particular as human documents and not as elements in a grand synthesised ideal.[27]

Patronage and the parish community.

The last area of investigation is that which tries to arrive at an understanding of the burdens imposed on a local community by the scale of tower building campaigns. This is done by an assessment of both the available documentary evidence and, crucially, the material evidence. As has already been noted most East Anglian churches were built using flint rubble and mortar. Happily for the church archaeologist, the materials and construction methods used mean that Norfolk churches and their towers wear their construction histories very much on their sleeves, in a way that buildings faced with freestone do not. It is often possible to identify from a close inspection of changes in the nature of materials

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[26] Durandus, *Rationale divinorum officiorum,* Neale, J.M., and Webb, B., (eds.), 1893.
[27] Gombrich, E.H., *Aby Warburg: an Intellectual Biography,* London, 1970, p143.

within a building where particular construction campaigns finished or where an earlier structure is amended or superseded by a later. It is also possible to understand where a tower remains unfinished, as in the case of the neighbouring towers of Felmingham (Plate 43) and Stratton Strawless (Plate 135), where ambitiously wide and powerful lower courses and buttresses are not carried up to the heights of third or fourth stages; or in cases of a number of often grand towers, such as Cawston and St. Andrew's, Norwich, that remain without parapets. An understanding of the apparently high proportion of funds allocated to tower construction can help to shed light on the ambitions and tastes of individual and communal patrons, particularly in relation to the very visible nature of display that a large tower affords.

Paul Binski wrote in the introduction to his study of Westminster Abbey and Plantagenet Kingship that "each generation creates the monuments it needs and deserves…" and that a study of these monuments provides us with "a discourse about the character and purpose of forms of power and identity".[28] What can the towers reveal about the cultural ambitions of their patrons? How did they, for instance, incorporate attitudes to commemoration, if at all? In an age when the concern with commemoration as a means towards the expiation of sin and remission of time in purgatory was an important influence in the creation of material culture, what role did the patronage of church towers have? How common was it for church towers to be built in competition with, or in imitation of, one another and what can any such *campanilismo* tell us about attitudes to parochial pride and identity? Some have averred that in an "age of faith" the wealth of a district was reflected in its churches. "We may reasonably conclude that any area in which almost every village has a fine medieval church was once an important centre of the wool trade upon which the national economy depended. The great wool churches of East Anglia….remain as memorials of the power, as well as the piety, of the 15th and 16th century clothiers who built them, while we are more likely to find small Norman churches left in areas which did not share this prosperity".[29] There is no doubt that local wealth and large building

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[28] Binski, P., *Westminster Abbey and the Plantagenets, Kingship and the Representation of Power, 1200-1400,* New Haven, 1995, p. vii.
[29] Anderson, M.D., *History and Imagery in British Churches,* London, 1971, p 208.

campaigns show a high degree of correlation, but this research aims to understand the degree to which wealth, often newly acquired, was the reason for a prestigious commission such as a grand church tower, or merely the necessary condition for such patronage.

It is only through the close examination of the elements that constitute church towers in Norfolk that such themes or ideologies can be judged or even considered. Such questions as those outlined above are addressed first in a broad art historical and historiographical context in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3 issues of style and design are considered and the notions of stylistic development and architectural taxonomy are discussed. Questions concerning the employment of emblems, symbols and architectural motifs as well as the connotative effect of the particular use of building materials are dealt with in Chapter 4, which also engages with the debate on the interpretation of the iconography of medieval architecture. Chapter 5 is concerned with the burdens of prestigious local commissions and extended building campaigns, involving an investigation and analysis of documented patronage. From the results of the analysis of the research data and of an attempt to integrate the themes addressed in the preceding chapters, a number of case studies of individual towers and groups of towers are presented throughout each of these chapters to supplement the results of that analysis and to highlight and characterise the salient findings. It is thus my ambition to address the concerns with the particular that have been expressed in this Introduction. It is my hope, in conclusion, that this project investigates not the intentions of the creators of church towers, for those can never be completely known, but "the circumstances out of which designs grew and the factors which were causally involved in their final shapes".[30]

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[30] Crossley, P., "Frankl's Text: Its Achievement and Significance" in Frankl, P., *Gothic Architecture*, Paul Crossley, ed., New Haven, 2000, p 30.

Chapter 2.

An overview of the history and historiography of the development of western towers in ecclesiastical architecture.

1. International

 In the second half of the sixth century, Gregory of Tours wrote about a pilgrim desperate for a relic who cut or shaved pieces off a bell-rope hanging from a tower into the basilica of St. Martin at Tours.[31] These shavings were then mixed with water to form a miraculous healing potion. The shrine of St. Martin and relics associated with the saint were well known for having curative properties, even the oil from lamps hanging near the tomb being efficacious in the treatment of eye complaints. The Merovingian kings of the fifth and sixth centuries treated the shrine as an oracle, rather as the Greeks at Delphi; King Chilperic wrote a letter to the saint asking for guidance on a matter of canon law and had it placed on his tomb. A blank piece of paper was left for the reply, but after waiting for three days the king gave up disappointed.[32] It is interesting for the architectural historian that this most illustrious of Merovingian churches had a tower and at least one bell, and that the bell seems to have been lodged in the tower.

The church of St. Martin that Gregory describes in various passages of his writings was constructed around the year 470 to replace a simple wooden structure erected at the time of the burial of the saint. This basilica, burned down and reconstructed at the end of the sixth century, is often seen as important or representative in the development of architecture in the lands of the old western Roman empire north of the Alps and the Pyrenees, exhibiting what has been labelled a proto-Romanesque style. It has been said to anticipate the developments seen during the Carolingian period three hundred years later and

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[31] Gregory of Tours, *The Miracles of the Bishop St. Martin,I,28,* in Van Dam, R., *Saints and their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul,* Princeton, 1993.
[32] Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks, V, 14,* Trans. Thorpe, L., Harmondsworth, 1974.

Romanesque architecture of the tenth and eleventh centuries.[33] The substance of these grand claims can be seen in the reconstruction of the basilica presented by Conant in his work on Carolingian and Romanesque Architecture[34] which shows an aisled church with a low clerestory, an apparent tribune, a transept that projects at ground level beyond the plane of the aisles and, crucially, two axial towers, one at the western end of the nave, the other over the crossing topped out with a lantern.[35] (Fig 7) Conant provides a disclaimer with this restoration in as much as he assures the reader that while the elements are certain, all details are hypothetical, and it is clear that his imagination of these elements certainly prophesies later buildings in Gaul, the main abbey church at Centula being chief amongst them.

Fig. 7. St Martin, Tours. Reconstruction: K. Conant

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[33] See Conant K.J., *Carolingian and Romanesque Architecture 800 – 1200,* Harmondsworth, 1979, pp39 – 41; Male, E., *La fin du paganisme en Gaule et les plus anciennes basiliques chretiennes,* Paris, 1950, pp.138–143.
[34] Conant, 1979, p.40.
[35] It is known that the church was oriented, unlike earlier Constantinian basilicas in Rome. Orientation had become the norm by the fifth century and occidentation was only revived, probably for programmatic reasons, during the Carolingian period.

Furthermore there is no direct documentary or archaeological evidence for the existence of a transept in this phase of the building.[36]

Nonetheless, sufficient written testimony exists to suggest that Conant is correct to include the two towers, even if the tower nearer the sanctuary may not have marked a crossing of nave and transept and may not have terminated in a lantern. That lanterns on church towers in this period were not unknown though, is suggested by a reference in the poetry of Gregory's contemporary Fortunatus, who mentions a "*turritus*" topped with a wooden spire in relation to the church built by Bishop Felix of Nantes.[37] Nevertheless, the reason for characterising St.Martin's basilica as "proto-Romanesque" seems to lie, above all, in the agglomeration of towers that recalls the verticality of medieval ecclesiastical architecture rather more than the tower-less and horizontal exteriors of the great Constantinian basilicas popularly held to be the models for church building in subsequent centuries. St. Martin's is thus seen as a very visible and representative break with a past tradition and somehow a pointer to a future in which the exterior of churches were dominated for nearly a millennium by great towers and spires.

The western tower at Tours was not fully integrated in the spatial arrangement of the church, but at ground level formed an entrance vestibule, similar to an exonarthex, that was separated from the main vessel of the church by a solid wall in which the main door was located. This is known from an inscription written on that door that provides an insight into the reasons for the construction of the tower that guarded it: "On entering the temple lift your eyes….this tower repels the proud and protects the humble of heart."[38] Clearly the inscription casts the tower in the role of metaphorical protector, a role well suited by its form,

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[36] In this regard Conant has followed Male's interpretation of the description of the basilica given by Gregory of Tours in *History of the Franks*, II, 14, in which he states some dimensions of the building and the number of windows and columns. Male believes that a spatial organisation that included a transept would have been necessary in a church that attracted a large number of pilgrims, and that only this extra architectural element could explain the number of windows, 52, and columns, 120, quoted by Gregory: Male, E., 1950, p.140.

[37] Fortunatus, *Carmina iii, 15,* quoted in Dalton, O., *Gregory of Tours, the History of the Franks,* Vol. 1, Oxford, 1927, p.324.

[38] Le Blant, E., *Inscriptions chretiennes de la Gaule anterieures au VIIIe siecle*, Vol. I, Paris, 1856-1865, pp.231,232.

reminiscent of military defences and fortified gateways. Whether this western tower is that referred to in the story of the relic-gathering pilgrim is not clear, for both Male and subsequently Vieillard-Troiekouroff[39] have interpreted the continuation of the door inscription as revealing the existence of an eastern or crossing tower: "…higher still is that tower which rises superbly into the sky and which conducted St. Martin to heaven." Another story from Gregory of Tours would seem to confirm this and place the tower directly in front of the shrine of the saint, perhaps illuminating it with the light from the windows in the lantern.[40] This in turn suggests that the builders were sufficiently accomplished and confident to raise a tower over an open space resting, presumably on four piers.

The evidence is compelling for the existence of two towers on the main axis of one of France's most important churches in the sixth century; one at the west end of the church, though not fully integrated with the main vessel of the building, the other located in front of the sanctuary, adjacent to the high altar and the shrine of St. Martin.[41] It also introduces elements that are common in the historiography of ecclesiastical tower architecture: bells, towers as places of defence or refuge, liturgical usage and, perhaps most importantly, symbolism. At St. Martin's basilica the inscription on the western door allows the tower to be seen as a place of succour for the humble, as much metaphorical as physical, just as the eastern tower was interpreted by Gregory of Tours as representing a stairway to heaven for Saint Martin. This celestial association is mirrored in a reference to the contemporary basilica of St. Croix – St. Vincent of Paris,[42] consecrated in 558 by St. Germain in the presence of King Childebert, as having a gilded central tower, something which a later basilica of St. Martin at Tours seems also to have had.[43]

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[39] Male, 1950, p 143; Vieillard-Troiekouroff, M., *Les monuments religieux de la Gaule d'apres les oeuvres de Gregoire de Tours,* Paris, 1974, p.398.

[40] Gregory of Tours, *The Life of St. Martin, I, 38* in Van Dam, 1993, Gregory tells the story of a young acolyte who attempted to commit suicide by throwing himself from the inside of a tower in the basilica, but through the intervention of the saint came to no harm, landing lightly on the pavement in front of the saint's tomb. This story would suggest that the tower was positioned just in front of the apse in which the saint's tomb was located.

[41] Gregory also mentions towers located near the high altar at St. Julien-de-Brioude (*The Miracles of St. Julien VII*) and at St. Felix-de-Gerona at Narbonne (*Glory of the Martyrs XCI*), quoted in Vieillard-Troiekouroff, 1974, pp.

[42] Gislemar, *Vita S. Doctrovei, IX* in Le Blant, 1856.

[43] Migne, *Patrologia Latina, CXXXIII, Sermo IV, de combustione basilicae beati Martini. "..quosdam grandaeviores fraters vidimus, qui ita testabantur dicentes quod machine domus*

It is evident, then, that towers adorned some of the major churches of France in the sixth century. However, those architectural historians who have addressed the question of the development of ecclesiastical towers have tended to concentrate on two major forms that made their appearances later in western Christendom: westworks, and twin-towered facades. This is not to say that earlier tower forms, such as those mentioned above, have been ignored, but have rather been treated as steps on a path of development that have led towards the realisation of the forms that have ultimately interested the scholars involved in this field. The approach to both of these types can be said to have been divided broadly into two strands. Firstly there has been a taxonomic approach that has aimed at finding sequential examples of architectural forms and therefore at suggesting a path of development. Secondly, there are art historians who have attempted to interpret towers iconographically, seeing connexions between examples based on the associations or connotations that each could have activated in the mind of a class of observer.

Taxonomic and functionist interpretations
The first approach is less ambitious, and its proponents have tended to locate the origins of the later fashion for medieval ecclesiastical tower building in western Christendom in the fifth- and sixth-century French churches mentioned above.[44] While this line of enquiry acknowledges the presence of towers in connexion with older churches built in other parts of the Christian world, most notably in Syria and Armenia, it has tended not to engage with the possibility that there is a serious link between them and the towers built later in western Europe that represent the main focus of this research. It is interesting to note that the starting point for discussion of medieval tower building is often the construction of the Carolingian imperial abbeys and chapels of the late eighth and early ninth centuries (and of their supposed forerunner at Tours) and how these in turn influenced the later church building programmes in the Ottonian empire, the French royal domain and the duchy of Normandy in the tenth and eleventh

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contra solem resplendens quasi monticulus aureus videbatur et tam gratam speciem cernentibus repraesentabat, ut gloriam beati Martini quodammodo testarentur."
[44] This is principally the thesis of Conant, 1979, which has been referenced by subsequent scholars.

centuries. These are, in their turn, held to be the precursors of the great towers of the thirteenth-century cathedrals. The problem with this teleological search for origins is that it subjugates everything that came before to the final stage in the development of an object or motif, whenever that has been chosen to be. This is very neatly summed up in Schaeffer's assertion that in tracing the development of the two-tower façade "we must refer to the thirteenth-century cathedrals of France, which in more than one sense represent the end point of a development and which are the norm and ideal toward which earlier forms had striven."[45] The perils of this approach are clear; that it is anachronistic to believe that earlier forms, or their designers, were doing anything other than producing the best and most appropriate results possible in the circumstances, let alone searching for or striving towards a notional future ideal; and that by seeking to identify an architectural evolution it casts aside many valid objects or motifs that deserve consideration on their own terms rather than on the terms of scholars seeking to construct histories based on a notional evolutionary taxonomy.

The appearance towards the end of the eighth century of large architectural forms at the west ends of major churches, which operated as more than narthexes or entrance porches, is usually associated with imperial patronage or, at least, with the patronage of those associated with Charlemagne and his successors. Much of the history of western art and architecture of this period has focused on the Carolingian adoption and transformation of Antique imperial forms, usually underplaying the cultural production of other peoples and polities in occidental Europe, such as the Lombard duchies of Italy, the Visigoths of northern Spain and, to a lesser extent, the Umayyad Caliphate of Cordoba. Yet the development of what is known in German as the *westwerk* seems superficially to owe little to Antique prototypes.

Although the important new church at St. Denis, dedicated in 775, had two small towers either side of an entrance porch at the west end,[46] "the most characteristically Northern and energetic of the church designs"[47] was best

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[45] Schaeffer, H., "The Origin of the Two-Tower Façade in Romanesque Architecture", *Art Bulletin* XXVII, 2, 1945, p85.
[46] Crosby produced a reconstruction of the 8th century abbey church based on his own excavations in Crosby, S. M., *L'Abbaye royale de Saint-Denis,* Paris, 1953, p.12.
[47] Conant, 1979, p.43.

represented at an early stage of development by the monastery of Centula or St. Riquier, reconstructed in the 790s. Although none of the monastic buildings dating from that time are extant and the main abbey church has been rebuilt three times, we are fortunate that a full description of the monastic complex and an illustration that corresponded closely to that text were included in *The Chronicle of Hariulf* dated 1088.[48] From this we can deduce that the main church of the complex (there were three in all), basilican in plan, had two axial towers in the manner of St. Martin at Tours. At Centula, though, the effect was to make the church seem double-ended, with the western tower raised above a transept and flanked by two prominent stair turrets that stand just to the west of the tower-transept agglomeration (Fig 8). There appears to be a similar arrangement for the sanctuary, though the reproduced drawing shows a prominent projecting eastern arm terminating in an apsidal ambulatory.
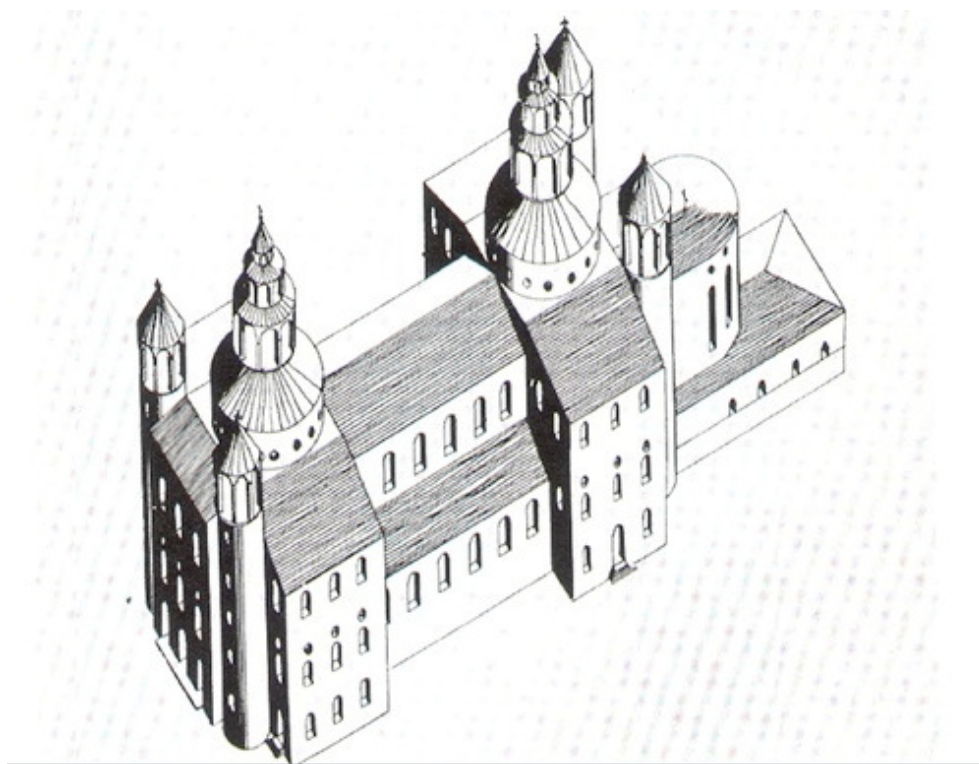

Fig. 8. St Riquier. Digitisation: California College of the Arts

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[48] Conant, 1979, p.43, n.3. This drawing was reproduced twice before the destruction of the manuscript in 1719. There is scholarly consensus that the account and drawing in the text can be relied upon.

Two seventeenth-century engravings based on the illustration in the chronicle show the two towers composed of large circular drums rising above the roof levels of the transepts each surmounted by three tapering conical stages depicted unmistakably as very tall open lanterns and terminating in large crosses.[49] The prominent flanking stair turrets finish in similar conical lanterns. Taking both engravings and documentation into account, Effmann proposed a reconstruction of the façade of the church that includes a triple portal entrance, an esonarthex of three stories between the twin stair turrets in front of the transept and occidental tower. This tower is not an independent element with an architectonic coherence from ground level upwards, but begins at the level of the roof of the transept. The result is that the façade is an agglomeration of elements that together form an imposing block of porch and transept, articulated by the large central tower and the side turrets.[50] What is apparent is that the façade gives no visual clue to the form of the church behind it. Indeed the nave is so completely dominated by the towers at either end that Hariulf called it a *vestibulum*.[51] While this was probably intended to imply the idea of a vestibule to the eastern tower and sanctuary, Heitz argues that the nave can equally be seen as a vestibule to the western tower. This is because he sees the western section as a self-contained church, an idea reflected in the French term he gives to westworks: *eglises-porches*.[52] Using evidence from Hariulf's description of the church together with knowledge of the reforms to the liturgy instigated by Angilbert, the abbot and patron of the rebuilt church, Heitz has argued that the form of the western section of the church was designed to satisfy liturgical demands.[53]

The tomb of Angilbert was placed in the porch in front of the main portal above which was a grand depiction of the Nativity, probably in mosaic. On entering the western section of the church there was a large hall resembling a

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[49] For a further discussion of the documentary evidence, see Parsons, D., 'The Pre-Romanesque Church of St Riquier: the Documentray Evidence,' *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, Vol.130, 1977

[50] Effmann, W., *Centula – Saint. Riquier. Eine Untersuchung zur Geschichte der kirchlichen Baukunst in der Karolingerzeit,* Munster, 1912, reproduced in Heitz, C., *Architecture et Liturgie a l'epoque carolingienne,* Paris, 1963, p26.

[51] "*Haec ab oriente habet ingentem turrem post cancellum, et, interposto vestibule, alia turris versus occidentem habetur priori aequalis…*", *The Chronicle of Hariulf,* lib. II, cap. VII quoted in Conant, 1979, p44.

[52] Heitz, 1963, p.24.

[53] Angilbert was one of the key figures in Charlemagne's Palace School and his appointment as Abbot of St. Riquier (as well as mayor of the town of Centula) highlights the importance of the monastery in the Carolingian system of patronage.

crypt, which was known as the *Cripta Sancti Salvatoris.* Heitz interprets this name as owing more to liturgical function than appearance, as the major reliquary of the abbey, the *Capsa major,* was found here. Directly above this space was another large room open to the east, therefore looking into the nave towards the sanctuary. An altar consecrated to the Saviour was placed here, facing east. Access to this room was given by the flanking stair turrets. Revealingly, the Rule of Angilbert states that masses were to be celebrated on Easter day and Christmas day at this altar by two priests, who were to communicate with children who were congregated in the tribunes (*ex ambulatoriis)* and those who waited at the foot of the stairs in the arcaded hall beneath.[54] In other words, the space enclosed by the western tower and transept was intended to be used as a parish church attached to the abbey for the people of Centula.

It is likely though, that such a structure was intended to be more than simply a parish church, and that its relationship with the rest of the church, particularly its mirror construction at the eastern end of the building, was intended to be significant. That a number of other great church buildings with imperial connexions were designed with similar emphasis on their western ends suggests that the importance attached to these new structures by Carolingian patrons reflected more than the exigencies of parochial liturgy. Where Heitz, Conant and others who interpret such buildings on the basis of taxonomy and utility fall short, is in neglecting to consider the ideological implications of the choices made by designers and patrons. The iconographical interpretation of westworks and other western tower forms will be considered below.

The *westwerk* in a form similar to that built at Centula, a turriform western block flanked by slender though prominent stair turrets, containing a vertical arrangement of entrance vestibule with chapel above, was a common feature in many of the great churches built throughout the ninth century, and it continued to be employed through to the eleventh century, as at St. Benoit-sur-Loire and Tournus, for example. Those who have not considered an iconographic interpretation of the particular chosen forms have been tempted to see a linear, evolutionary process in the patterns of development. Conant wrote that "the

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[54] Hariulf, *Chronique de l'Abbaye de Saint-Riquier,* Lot, F., ed., Paris, 1894, p.299.

wonderful design for Angilbert's church dedicated in 799, evidently made a sensation, and echoes of it are perceptible in ecclesiastical architecture for centuries." He went on to present a chain of influence, explaining that "from Saint-Riquier, Reims, and also Corbie the motif went to Germany… in fact the design of Saint-Riquier had an enduring success in Germany, where its influence can be traced from generation to generation through centuries. The cathedral of Mainz comes to mind: the building of 978 and its successive transformations are merely variations on the Centula theme."[55] Conant is surely correct in recognising patterns of similarity in all the buildings he lists, yet in restricting himself to an approach based solely on a formal classification he avoids exploring why designers and patrons chose to build such similar churches. For the proponents of a taxonomic analysis later westworks were designed as a direct result of a purely aesthetic consideration of earlier models. It is implicit in this perspective that an architectural motif is dependent for its inspiration on an earlier similar form and that the pattern of development flows logically from this formal relationship. But is it really the case that Corvey (Fig. 9), Mainz and the Palace Chapel at Aachen were built with westworks only because the new motif at Centula had "made a sensation"? The analysis does not adequately convey why that particular form was chosen over any other model that was available to the designer at the time. In ignoring the possibilities of an ideological element in the choice of design, it is assumed that the major factors in play are utility (as propounded by Heitz in his examinations of architecture and liturgy) and taste, that architectural form is determined by previous models mediated by the taste of the patron and designer. It leaves unasked and unanswered what taste is and where it comes from.

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[55] Conant, 1979, p.46.

Fig. 9. Corvey

Iconographic interpretations.

One can readily identify patterns of similarity in many of the structures at the western ends of great churches in western Christendom from the eighth century to the end of the middle ages. Changes in dominant forms such as westworks or twin-towered facades can be traced and classified according to chronology and geography, and notions of stylistic development and dissemination can be used to describe these phenomena. However, none of these actually explains why such forms came to be chosen and have such a lasting hold on the design process. Taxonomy cannot identify the cultural influences that came to bear on particular forms. Why, for instance, did the notion of placing a pair of towers at the western façade of great churches, one at each side of the entrance, come to dominate ecclesiastical design in much of Europe for seven hundred years after the building of the Norman Abbey of St. Etienne at Caen to the point where it became the default choice? (Fig 10)

Fig. 10. Caen, St Etienne

Can this be imputed merely to a convention of design that prevailed long after questions of taste or utility had withered as deciding factors in the choice of form? One approach to addressing these questions has been to examine the climate of ideas that subsisted at the time of the construction of these buildings and to try and reconstruct the ideological imperatives that went into shaping their forms.

It should be noted at this point that the ongoing debate on the iconographic interpretation of architecture has been bedevilled by the notion that architectural forms have meaning. The language of discourse in this field even resorts to the idea that a particular building or motif carries meaning. Hence, Paul Crossley's essay summarising the state of the iconographical debate is entitled "Medieval Architecture and Meaning: the Limits of Iconography".[56] The idea that things 'convey' is a very insecure concept, and it is surely safer not to impute such anthropomorphic concepts to a mute edifice, but to speak of the associations and connotations that architecture might encourage in an observer or class of observers. In this way significatory analysis can "situate [an architectural motif] in its cultural milieu."[57] This, however, begs the question about the intentions of those who created the architecture to convey certain associations and connotations. In the absence of explicit statements of intent, we can never know what patrons and designers were thinking when they exploited particular forms or motifs. It is only through the identification of the persistent exploitation of similar forms correlating to a pattern of use or beliefs that we can reach a provisional conclusion about the motivation for using such motifs in a metaphorical or associative way. Even the cumulative weight of evidence will allow any conclusion to be tentative at best. However, the approach does allow a much wider class of objects to be considered than does a taxonomic approach, for here we are dealing with the transmission of ideas as much as with physical forms. As Krautheimer explained in his "Introduction to an Iconography of Medieval Architecture" there are two types of copying. The first is formalistic, where the copy bears a strong visual, formal similarity to the prototype. The second he calls "symbolic" where the copy is a "symbol" of, or bears strong

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[56] Crossley, P., "Medieval Architecture and Meaning: the Limits of Iconography" in *The Burlington Magazine 130,* 1988, pp.116 – 122.
[57] Crossley, 1988, p.116, referring to Aby Warburg's view of the utility of iconography.

resonances of, the prototype.[58] Where a taxonomic analysis allows only an examination of the first type of relationship, iconographic interpretation considers both. Hence the wide-ranging class of buildings that can be considered in an iconographic assessment of the two major design forms of the west end of great churches in the Middle Ages: the westwork and the twin-towered façade.

Whilst medieval architecture has been subjected to iconographical analysis from the time of Isidore of Seville in the seventh century and William Durandus in the thirteenth to German art historians in the decades after the Second World War and beyond, little attention has been paid to the subject of western towers and towered facades. One major exception to this is the study by E. Baldwin Smith of Roman Imperial symbolism in medieval architecture. He examines the connexion between towered facades and the notion of kingship as conveyed in the ancient city-gate and in palace architecture adopted by the Romans from the Hellenistic Near East.[59] Baldwin Smith saw both westworks and twin towered facades in the continuing tradition of tower forms used as metaphors for both cosmic and temporal *imperium.* He acknowledged that there were gaps in the evidence, but suggested that it was difficult to disregard a continuum that began when the Mesopotamians "attributed anagogical values to the towered façade of their kingly strongholds and transferred this gateway feature to their palaces and temples; that the Egyptians made the towered pylon a palace, temple and cosmic symbol; that the Syrians in the Roman period added towers over the entrance to the temples of their sky-gods; that the Christians in Syria made use of towers to transform the primitive church into a Royal House of God; that the late Roman and Byzantine architects and artists made the towered façade a symbol of the *Sacrum Palatium;* and that the Carolingian emperors constructed a towered façade over the entrance to their royal abbey churches as a ceremonial *locus regalis* and a monumental assertion that the *Palatium* was over the church."[60] This hypothesis would need a great weight of cumulative supporting evidence to persuade any scholar today that repeated use of motifs over such a span of time is

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[58] Krautheimer, R., "Introduction to an Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture," *The Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, V,* 1942, pp.1 – 33.
[59] Baldwin Smith, E., *Architectural Symbolism of Imperial Rome and the Middle Ages,* New York, 1978.
[60] Baldwin Smith, 1978, pp.8, 9.

more than merely conventional, but reflects the ideology of each successive cultural generation.

Existing evidence suggests that twin towers on church facades either side of an entrance porch were common in fifth century Syria. There are examples at Turmanin, Qalb Lozeh, Ruweha and at R'safah, which to Krautheimer "seem to have served [no] practical or liturgical function." Four very prominent towers rise from the ambulatory of the centrally-planned San Lorenzo Maggiore in Milan. Axial towers at the west end and sanctuaries of important Gallic churches were built in the sixth century. And Carolingian patrons and designers placed great emphasis on tower forms at the west end of their churches as has been outlined above. All these motifs could have recalled ideas of kingship both in the sense of their earthly patrons as well as being metaphors for the King of Kings, the King of Heaven, thereby metaphorically casting the churches of which they were part as the Heavenly Jerusalem. There is much evidence that the towered façade motif derives ultimately from the ancient Near East where "the gateway was a symbol of heavenly authority because it was the entrance to the domain and dwelling of both godlike kings and kinglike gods. Its arcuated portal and towered bulwark continued to have ideological value throughout Antiquity and the Middle Ages because it was the place where the populace received with dramatic pageantry their ruler as a divine being, a triumphant victor, and a potential saviour."[61] That the Roman emperors adopted this 'performance' of oriental kingship is well known, and architectural motifs were systematically used to reinforce in the minds of the people the grandeur and divine authority of the supreme ruler. Coins from the reigns of Diocletian and Constantine show a castrum portal, while those from the reigns of various emperors show twin towered city gates, all reinforcing the idea of imperial authority through the image of a sacred entrance.

After Constantine's adoption of Christianity many motifs of pagan imperial authority were retained and used by Christian rulers and lordly patrons. This is as true of architectural forms as it is of numismatic or pictorial conventions. It could be seen in the Great Palace in Constantinople where

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[61] Baldwin Smith, 1978, p.10.

amongst numerous Roman motifs was the Chalce, a large domical vestibule where the most important ceremonies took place and where the imperial liturgy cast the emperor as "the Kosmicos Autocrator, the Ecumenical Master of the World, the Pontifex Maximus of the Church, the Isapostolos and the Christos-Basileus."[62] This type of domed hall had been an imperial commonplace since Nero constructed such a structure to imitate the cosmos in the *Domus Aurea.*

In this context of the appropriation of imperial forms by Christian patrons, the emphasis was shifted from the glorious presentation of a sacred emperor to the promise of salvation of a heavenly King of Kings. As Baldwin Smith emphasises, these forms, whether architectural, liturgical or pictorial, were the only means by which the spiritual and ideological concerns of great patrons could be "made apparent to a public accustomed to visualise divinity in imperial terms."[63] Furthermore, when the Carolingians sought to revive in the West the idea of a divinely invested emperor these motifs could be used not only to give substance to ecclesiastical iconography but also to support the political ambitions of the rulers who intended to be seen as one with the state. In order to show that they were the heirs of Constantine, these rulers and their successors in the Western (Holy) Roman Empire commissioned towers at the western ends of their royal abbeys and chapels as metaphors of the King's Gate to the *Sacrum Palatium* as well as Roman Triumph. Taking this thesis further, Baldwin Smith argued that westworks, which appeared initially only on imperial abbeys or palace chapels that emperors were likely to visit, presented opportunities for the emperor to be enthroned in the church as earthly counterpart of the *Majestas Domini.*[64] The elevated rooms that looked down into the nave of such westworks as those at Centula, Corvey or the Palatine Chapel at Aachen would make dramatic stages for the enthroned emperor to appear above his subjects as King and High-Priest. Also at Aachen, as at Centula, there was a concave vestibule that opened from the west façade of the westwork onto a large atrium that recalls the appearance vestibule on the façade of the Palace of the Exarchs at Ravenna that was well known to Carolingian patrons. It is interesting to note in the light of iconographical interpretation of Carolingian towered facades that many

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[62] Rambaud, A., *Etudes sur l'histoire Byzantine,* Paris, 1912, p.177.
[63] Baldwin Smith, 1978, p.74.
[64] Baldwin Smith, 1978, p.83.

westworks were separately dedicated to the Saviour, such as those at Centula, Aachen, Mainz, Fulda, Werden, Farfa, Fontanella, Frankfurt and at St. Nicasius at Reims, consistent with the protocol of 877 in which the emperor was called *Salvator Mundi* .[65]

If the thesis that a westwork was a type of imperial palace chapel at the west end of an imperial foundation, and that it conveyed associations of temporal as well as spiritual authority, is correct then it may also help to explain why the increasing choice of towered facades was broadly limited to lands north of the Alps that fell within the emperors' domain. Areas that recognised papal claims to supremacy do not seem to have had many towered churches, other than those such as Farfa, with strong imperial connexions, or in those parts of the south of Italy and Sicily that were later to fall under the control of northern Europeans. That the Church gradually managed to transfer the association of towered facades from the figure of the emperor as *Christus Domini* to Christ as the *Majestas Domini,* and to the heavenly gateway of an Augustinian City of God, does not affect the proposition that the notion still lingered for centuries after the Carolingians, and perhaps explains the Norman use of the motif in newly conquered territories. Nevertheless, by the tenth and eleventh centuries those associations and connotations that the Church promoted would have become well established in the minds of observers in Imperial, French and Norman territories and, although the forms of towered facades changed, the basic iconographic association remained.

As the Papacy triumphed from the early twelfth century, the westwork, that most imperial of forms, lost its currency, and twin-towered facades became the favourite choice for the designers and patrons of many of the great churches in northern Europe. The development of the bay system in Norman architecture allowed western twin towers to be fully integrated into the main vessel of a church if the designer or patron wished, with each tower being supported on the piers of the arcade of the westernmost bays of either aisle. As the potential of designers and builders to manage the distribution of the great mass and stress involved in erecting very tall buildings increased, it was the twin tower solution that came to characterise the appearances of many of the great Gothic cathedrals

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[65] Schramm, P.E., *Der Konig von Frankreich,* I, Weimar, 1939, p.40, n.4.

of western and Northern Europe. The opportunity to decorate such a facade in ways that could convey an enormous variety of associations existed, yet Baldwin Smith's thesis insists that it remained a "Gate of Heaven with over its Royal Door a round window made resplendent in honour of the King of Heaven, and crowned with a celestial arcade often made more explicit by the addition of a King's Gallery."[66] While this is a conclusion that infers much about the intentions of the medieval cathedral patrons and must remain tentative, it is not improbable that the magnificence of these towered gateways was readily and intuitively associated in the minds of an observer with the glory of the metaphorical Kingdom of Heaven that lay beyond their portals.

As a postscript to this discussion of architectural iconography it must be stressed that the associations and connotations that buildings evoke and, indeed, the emotions that they provoke, cannot be controlled by those who had them erected. That towers had great symbolic power is illustrated by episodes from the ninth-century Umayyad caliphate in Spain. A Christian writer, Albar of Cordoba, complained that Christians were obliged to protect their ears from the cries of the muezzin emanating from numerous minarets, and lamented bitterly that, in violation of earlier orders, the towers of Christian churches were being torn down. In his lament the 'power' of the minaret is comparable to that of the church tower as the most visible expression of their respective religions. He went on to describe how Muslims when hearing the sound of bells in Christian bell-towers "wail out repeatedly unspeakable things".[67] Another Christian writer wrote that they "begin to exercise their tongues in all kind of swearing and foulness."[68] Dodds suggests that the tower minaret may have been adopted in Spain as a reaction to the perceived power of the bell tower in Christian communities.[69]

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[66] Baldwin Smith, 1978, p.76.
[67] Albar of Cordoba, *Indiculus Luminosus,* VI, trans. in Colbert, E., *The Martyrs of Cordoba (850-859),* Washington D.C., 1962.
[68] Eulogius of Cordoba, *Memorials*, Lib I, 21, in Dodds. J., *Al-Andalus; The Art of Islamic Spain,* New York, 1992, p.17.
[69] Dodds, 1992, pp.13-18. Dodds recounts how when Al-Mansur sacked Santiago de Compostela in the tenth century he took the bells from the cathedral and had them transported to the Great Mosque at Cordoba to be used as oil lamps. This subversion of a powerful symbol was reversed when Ferdinand III conquered Cordoba in 1236 and had the bells carried back to Compostela on the backs of Muslim slaves.

2. England

The history and historiography of the development of western towers in England will be examined only briefly in this chapter as much of the subject is considered in more detail in subsequent chapters that deal with the interpretation of the research data. Nevertheless a short overview of earlier towers is necessary, particularly as so few of those built before the Norman Conquest remain. Indeed, the Normans are represented as having a policy for modernising great churches by replacing them with their own designs, in itself a symbolic expression of triumph and very much a political programme. Their vigorous new style of architecture characterised by a rigid architectural division of the nave into bays and by the twin-towered façade, exemplified in the two ducal abbeys at Caen, was adopted widely in the conquered kingdom when cathedrals and abbeys were rebuilt. As an expression of a triumphal ideology and of the association with royal or aristocratic patronage, the twin-towered façade was an immediately recognisable motif, because it had not been seen before.[70] A key monument, sadly now destroyed, was Lanfranc's cathedral at Canterbury, begun in 1070, echoed and elaborated at the abbey of St Augustine's, a few hundred yards to the east. Both are known from topographical evidence. Typical examples that remain are the lower courses of the towers at Durham, the towers at Southwell Minster and the west façade of Dunfermline Abbey, a royal foundation in Scotland (Fig. 11). The motif had almost certainly not been seen in England before, although Edward the Confessor is known to have followed some Norman fashions in the construction of Westminster Abbey it may not have applied to the west end, realised after his death. Similarly, the Norman conquerors of Sicily and southern Italy chose to build many of their great churches with twin towers at the west end, though not at the ends of the aisles, but in wider positions either side of a shallow narthex, as at the cathedrals of Monreale, Cefalu (Fig. 12) and Palermo.

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[70] Even a lesser church could use the twin tower motif as an indication of lordly patronage. St. Margaret's Church in King's Lynn was founded by the ambitious Bishop of Norwich, Herbert de Losinga, in 1101 as both a parish church and as a satellite of Norwich Cathedral Priory. Its status was indicated by its large twin western towers, parts of which remain in the lower courses of later towers.

Fig. 11. Dunfermline Abbey

Fig. 12. Cefalu

In Puglia too, in a Norman context, great churches were built with such towers, as in the case of S. Nicola at Bari. The motif, if not the execution, is similar and instantly recognisable as foreign and dominant, for in southern Italy, as in England, it was hitherto unknown. The insistence with which it was employed in newly-dominated Norman territory suggests that the choice of this design was governed by more than taste alone and would have seemed to the local population a very visible and massive sign of the presence of their new overlords.

The loss of all large scale ecclesiastical architecture in England in the three centuries preceding the mid-eleventh century has meant that the historiography of great church architecture in the Latin West deals largely with building within the borders of the former Carolingian empire and its successor, the Ottonian empire. This lacuna has hampered consideration of English buildings in the wider context of European architectural development.[71] However, the question of the construction of the western section of a great cathedral has been addressed in the case of the Old Minster at Winchester. Documentary analysis and archaeological research have revealed that the Minster, after the building campaign of the late tenth century, was comparable to the greatest churches of the Empire in both form and scale.[72]

In 971 the remains of St. Swithun were translated into the Old Minster from his tomb, which stood outside the west front of the church. In 980 a new west end and nave were dedicated after a large-scale campaign of reconstruction, presumably partly connected with the translation of the saint's bones. There was a second dedication of the completed works of reconstruction in 993 or 994. The work was begun by St. Aethelwold, the great patron and reforming bishop. Much is known of it from three closely related texts concerning the miracles of St.

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[71] Despite the relative paucity of historiography in this area, the following have addressed the subject: Fernie, E., *The Architecture of the Anglo-Saxons,* London, 1983; Kerr, M. and Kerr, N., *Anglo-Saxon Architecture,* Aylesbury, 1983; Taylor, H.M. and Taylor, J., *Anglo-*Saxon *Architecture,* Cambridge, 1978; Fisher, E.A., *The Greater Anglo-Saxon Churches,* London, 1962; Clapham, A.W., *English Romanesque Architecture before the Conquest,* Oxford, 1930.
[72] The documentary analysis was undertaken by R.N.Quirk and the results presented in Quirk, R.N., 'Winchester Cathedral in the Tenth Century,' *The Archaeological Journal,* CXIV, 1957, pp.28 – 68. This research prompted the excavations in the Close of the present cathedral carried out by Martin Biddle, the results presented in a series of articles in Biddle, M., *The Antiquaries Journal* 44 ,1964 to 50, 1970.

Swithun and the life of Aethelwold.[73] The most important text from an architectural point of view is the poem, attributed to Wulfstan, that recounts the miracles of St. Swithun including a long passage in Latin elegiacs describing the rebuilding of the Old Minster. The most important section should be quoted in full. It says that Aethelwold:

> also repaired the courts (*atria)* of this ancient temple with lofty walls and new roofs, strengthening it in its southern and northern parts with solid porticus and divers arches. He also added many chapels with sacred altars which keep the entry of the threshold doubtful (*retinent dubium liminis introitum*), so that whoever walks in these courts with unfamiliar tread, cannot tell whence he comes or whither to return, since open doors are seen on every hand, nor does any certain path or a way appear. Standing, he turns his wandering gaze hither and thither and is amazed at the Attic roofs of the Daedalian floor, until a better informed guide appears and leads him to the threshold of the furthest vestibule (*extremi limina vestibuli*). Here wondering in himself he crosses himself and cannot know in his astonished breast from what place he is to get out. Thus the structure shines in its construction and gleams in its variety, sustaining the mother church which that devout father himself founded, built, endowed and dedicated.[74]

As Quirk pointed out, various interpretations of this passage are possible, but as the text locates the construction in question at the "*liminis introitum*" it probably refers to the western entrance. The multiple entrances and complexity of the spatial arrangement recall the western entrance at St. Riquier and, in particular, the "Attic roofs of the Daedalian floor" bring to mind the labyrinthine effect of the lower stage of the westwork at Corvey. Quirk interpreted the text as describing a type of westwork along imperial lines and this appears to be borne out by the excavations carried out in the 1960s. These revealed a large, square

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[73] The first is a prose account of the miracles of St. Swithun by Lantfred, a monk of the Old Minster; the second is a partly parallel account of the miracles in a poem attributed to Wulfstan, a cantor at the Old Minster; the third is a prose Life of St. Aethelwold, usually attributed to Wulfstan. The three sources are thoroughly investigated in Quirk, 1957, pp.30 – 38.

[74] Migne, *Patrologia Latina,* 137, 1853, 107 – 114, translated in Quirk, 1957, p.44.

structure at the west end of the older parts of the Old Minster, flanked by two vast apsidal forms to north and south. This in turn was preceded by a smaller structure to the west, attached at its eastern side (Fig 13).
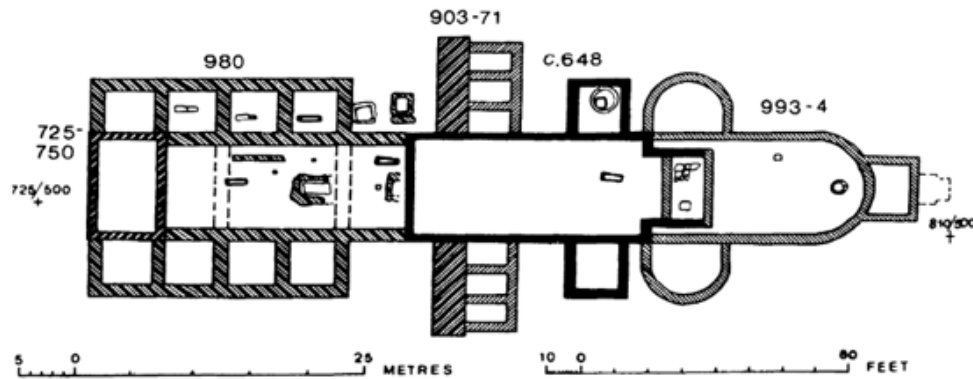
Fig. 13. Plan of the Old Minster, Winchester after Kjolbye-Biddle, B., 1986

This complicated western structure of the church reveals its importance through its grand scale. The flanking forms project further and more dramatically than the equivalent transept at the east end in a form of western transept. There is no doubt that the importance given to the west end of the church is analogous to contemporary developments in the architecture of the Holy Roman Empire. Without a description of the elevation of the westwork it is impossible to know its form, function or possible effect, but the evidence overwhelmingly suggests that it was built in association with the translation of St. Swithun's relics, even possibly extending over the site of what had been his external tomb. Quirk suggested that the translation may not have been so much a movement of the saint's bones to the church, as the movement of the church to cover the saint's bones. As well as the saintly connexion, it is important to stress that Winchester was the most important royal city in England at the time. The New Minster, so close to the Old Minster that their singing choirs often competed, had been built by Alfred and housed his remains. When Aethelwold began its reconstruction, the Old Minster was very much the lesser building and the probability is strong that the campaign also had a competitive nature. King Edgar understood the

iconography of imperial forms, as was evident from his coronation at Bath in 973. Having reunited all the English kingdoms under his rule, he would presumably have seen his reign in relation to that of his great predecessor, King Alfred. The reconstruction of the Old Minster in his royal capital at Winchester was an opportunity to express his imperial credentials using current architectural motifs from the continental Empire. Whether the westwork at Winchester had a throne on its upper stage from which the king could survey his subjects in imperial passivity, as the emperors could at Aachen or any of the other imperial abbeys or chapels, is unknown, but it seems highly likely.

Aethelwold had the abbeys at Peterborough and Ely rebuilt and, through these, there were connexions with Bury St. Edmund's as well. It is still evident that all these buildings preserved the motif of a central western tower flanked by a transept after the Norman rebuilding (that at Ely still stands), and it has been suggested by Quirk that the foundations of Bishop Walkelin's Norman cathedral at Winchester indicate this arrangement also, rather than the twin-towered façade that is otherwise accepted as having been constructed.[75] If this represents recognition of a type of "Aethelwoldan" heritage, it circumstantially helps to confirm the resonance of the prototype of the Old Minster. Nevertheless, this did not stop Walkelin building his vast new cathedral directly across the corner of the site of the demolished Old Minster in a characteristic show of Norman determination to modernise previous institutions.

Lesser churches in the Anglo-Saxon period were built either with central towers or single western towers on the main axis of the church, or both. Twin-towered facades were not adopted in this period and were rarely built on lesser churches even after the Conquest. A classification of these Anglo-Saxon towers has been carried out by Fisher, based largely on type and function; he does not include iconographical analysis.[76] He suggests that central towers were often the structure around which the rest of the church was planned or developed, in the manner of Carolingian Germigny-des-Pres. The church at Athelney was, to judge from written accounts (William of Malmesbury) of a similar type. The best extant example is at Barton-on-Humber, where the nave was the ground floor of

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[75] Quirk, 1957, p.54.
[76] Fisher, E.A., *Anglo-Saxon Towers,* Newton Abbot, 1969

the tower, there is a short projecting chancel and an 'adjunct' on the west side of the tower. This type of turriform church needs further scholarly analysis, but is not directly relevant to this project.

Far more pertinent are the early axial western towers attached to churches in England. Examples exist at Corbridge, Jarrow, Monkwearmouth and Brixworth, the latter two possibly dating from as early as the eighth century.[77](Fig. 14)

Fig. 14. Brixworth

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[77] Taylor, H.M., and Taylor, J., *Anglo-Saxon Architecture, Vol.1,* Cambridge, 1978, pp173-175, 109, 338, 432-444.

They were probably erected over western porches that already existed. Following these models, western towers seem to have become the norm: Fisher identifies about ninety excluding porch towers.[78] Interestingly, western towers continued to be built after the Conquest and it therefore seems that local architectural traditions were largely unaffected by the change of political system and dynasty in 1066. Broadly speaking, a single tower at the west end of the church remained the most popular choice if a tower was built at all, although low crossing towers were not uncommon and came to be associated with grander buildings, such as New and Old Shoreham in Sussex and Devizes in Wiltshire. New designs were steadily introduced and through the twelfth century towers became more massive. Novel architectural motifs were sometimes chosen to decorate them, such as the tightly organised and repetitive round-headed blind arcading that can be seen today at Sandwich in Kent and on the central tower at Old Shoreham in Sussex (Fig 15). However, many parochial patrons continued to choose local forms that were familiar, rather than the new and undoubtedly more expensive Norman tower forms[79]. This has led to confusion in the ranks of those who are concerned with dating and classifying local church types from this period, as the debate surrounding East Anglian round towers illustrates.[80]

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[78] Fisher, 1969, p.56.

[79] A typical example of this is the confusion surrounding the use of long and short work for the quoins at the corners of towers or other parts of the church. Conventionally held to be an Anglo-Saxon method, the presence of long and short work was used by antiquarians to date a building to before the Norman Conquest. This technique is now known to have persisted after the Norman period began. As a result architectural historians generally refer to Anglo- Saxon Romanesque as a style and method of construction that persisted for some time after 1066.

[80] See Messent, C., 1958; Hart, S., 2003; Heywood, S., 2000, for different interpretations of the dating of East Anglian round towers.

Fig. 15. Old Shoreham

Much has been written about East Anglian round towers, almost all concerned with dating, typological classification and the search for prototypes.[81] Earlier notions that the majority of round towers are of Anglo-Saxon date have

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[81] The latest works include Hart, S., *The Round Church Towers of England,* Ipswich, 2003; Heywood, S.R., "The Round Towered Churches of Norfolk and Northern Europe" in *Norfolk Churches Trust Annual Report,* 1999/2000; but see also Messent, C., *The Round Towers to English Parish Churches,* Norwich, 1958.

steadily been replaced with the consensus that the great majority were built after the Conquest, even as late as the thirteenth century. This would indicate that the persistence of architectural forms at a local level does not always, or perhaps often, conform to idealistic notions of style development. That certain architectural forms continue to be chosen long after newer alternatives become available sometimes confounds those whose notion of cultural development would have them evolving according to a neat progressive succession. More work needs to be directed towards this aspect of the continuation of round towers as a popular architectural motif in East Anglia through the Middle Ages.

Most scholarly work concerning the western towers of parish churches focuses on those towers constructed in the later Middle Ages, built in what is commonly called the Perpendicular Style. An analysis of this work is integrated in succeeding chapters, particularly that which discusses towers in the context of stylistic development, and so it is not analysed here. For the present, it is enough to mention that the attention given to towers, stemming from Allen's great compendium of Perpendicular towers, is largely taxonomic in nature and is often concerned with attribution.[82] What little attention that is given to the towers of minor churches in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries follows the same pattern of typological classification and little more. In both E. Tyrrell Green's study of towers and spires[83] and the relevant chapters in Bond's great work on Gothic architecture[84] the progressive development of towers and spires is described and classified with little reference to the context in which design decisions were made.

The most important development during this period is the employment of the spire as a dominant motif. The existing evidence seems to indicate that spires

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[82] Allen, F.J., *The Great Church Towers of England, Chiefly of the Perpendicular Period,* Cambridge, 1932. For questions of attribution see, in particular, Harvey, J., *English Medieval Architects: a Biographical Dictionary Down to 1550,* Gloucester, 1984, and *The Perpendicular Style, 1330 – 1485,* London, 1978. Some of the most ambitious towers built in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are in Somerset and, perhaps, partly because of this most research into later medieval church towers that is geographically defined is concerned with this county, to the exclusion of wider taste, origins and connotations. See Allen, F.J., 'The Classification of Somerset Church Towers,' *Proceedings of the Somersetshire Archaeological and Natural History Society L and LI,* 1904, 1905: Wright, P. P., *The Parish Church Towers of Somerset,* Avebury, 1981: Harvey, J. H., "The Church Towers of Somerset" in *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society 23-26,* 1978-1982, pp.157-183.
[83] Tyrrell Green, E., *Towers and Spires,* London, 1907. The most comprehensive account of tower building nationwide for the 12th to 14th centuries.
[84] Bond, F., *Gothic Architecture in England,* London, 1905, pp. 586-638.

became fashionable at a later date in England than in much of the rest of northern Europe, provided that one regards the 'helm' roofs of the Pre-Conquest period as a separate phenomenon.[85] Extant examples of Romanesque spires dating from the end of the eleventh century can be found throughout northern France, as at Loches, Indre-et-Loire; Etampes, Seine-et-Oise, and St. Michel Vaucelles near Caen, for instance. The earliest examples in England date from a century later and, like their earliest counterparts on the Continent, clearly show that their designers conceived of them as an extension of low pyramidal roofs. Unlike French spires though, early English examples such as those at Horsham in Sussex (Fig. 16) or Sleaford in Lincolnshire overhang, with prominent eaves, the towers from which they spring.

Fig. 16. Horsham

As this does not allow for an intermediate stage between tower and octagonal spire, the transition from a square form to a polygonal one clearly posed

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[85] Tyrell Green, E., 1907, pp.67-83.

problems for their designers. The most common solution was to fill the four empty corners at the top of the tower with squat half-pyramids which masked the awkward junction: the result was known as a broach spire, of which an instructive example can be found at Leighton Buzzard (Fig. 17).
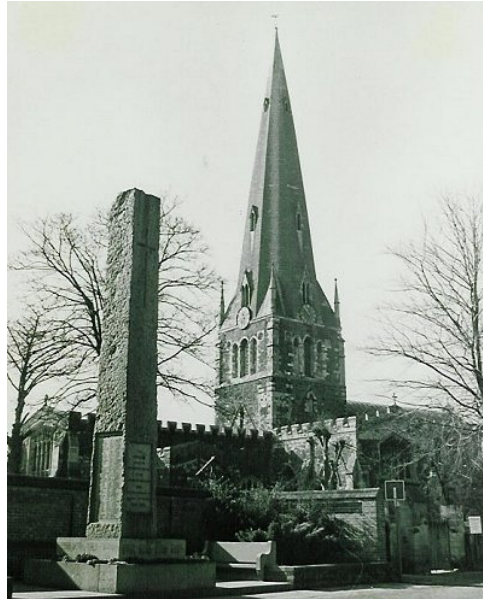
Fig. 17. Leighton Buzzard

This problem was resolved when spires began to be designed to spring from within a parapet at the top of a tower. When the parapet carried pinnacles at the four corners, as was increasingly common from the end of the thirteenth and through the fourteenth centuries, the transition from tower to spire was more fluent, as can be seen at Grantham or St. Mary's in Bristol, for example. Most spires that remain from this period are to be found in parts of the country that had ready access to good building stone. There are comparatively few extant masonry spires in areas where flint was the primary construction material, although wooden spires are not uncommon in the chalk and flint zones of Sussex, Hampshire and Wiltshire. They are rarest of all in East Anglia, where only a very few can be seen, such as those at Snettisham in Norfolk, or at Woolpit in Suffolk, and it is one of the aims of this project to investigate the circumstances of this phenomenon.

Another major development in tower construction in the thirteenth century was the tendency to use buttresses as an aesthetic motif, rather than merely a structural device. While buttresses employed in distributing the thrust of nave roofs had greatly affected the appearance of ecclesiastical buildings, and the aesthetic possibilities of this structural development had been exploited since the end of the twelfth century, the buttressing of towers did not changed radically until nearly a century later. From the late thirteenth century designers employed buttresses at the corners of towers, set either at forty-five degrees to the plane of the tower wall, or in pairs at ninety degrees, to articulate the mass of masonry. This device is examined fully in subsequent chapters, though as an illustration of the development of the form one can compare the treatment of the buttresses on the tower at Sleaford, constructed in the early thirteenth century, where they appear as no more than masses of masonry that serve to thicken the wall at the corners of the tower, with those of Woolpit of the fourteenth century, which recede in stages up the height of the tower and terminate in crocketed finials (Fig. 18).

Fig. 18. Woolpit

The change in approach to the use of buttresses, together with the increase in elaboration in the design of parapets is perhaps the most significant material development in tower construction in the period immediately prior to that addressed in this research.

As square-topped towers at the west ends of parish churches became more fashionable in the second half of the fourteenth century and spires were eschewed by the more ambitious patrons and designers, greater emphasis was placed upon parapets and corner pinnacles. Although parapet designs had already become more innovative, as discussed above in connection with the transition from tower to spire, spireless designs placed more emphasis on parapets to terminate the tower and, where pinnacles were prominent, to emphasise verticality and the notion of aspiration that spires had hitherto suggested. As parapets were commonly designed in the form of battlements, the impression of solidity and urbanity that a square-topped tower conveys was increased for the viewer and helped mark a radical change in the approach to tower commissioning and construction. In late fourteenth- and fifteenth- century England the tendency to increasingly elaborate and ambitious parapet design is one of the dominant features in the new phase of tower building. This is seen very clearly in the south-west of England, particularly in Somerset, as elaborated by Allen and Tyrrell Green.[86] In particular, the use of pierced crenellations reached an almost 'mannerist' level of invention and abstraction at churches such as Dundry (Fig. 19) or St Mary Magdalene in Taunton (Fig. 20).

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[86] Allen, 1932, pp.11-54; Tyrell Green, 1907, pp.191, 192.
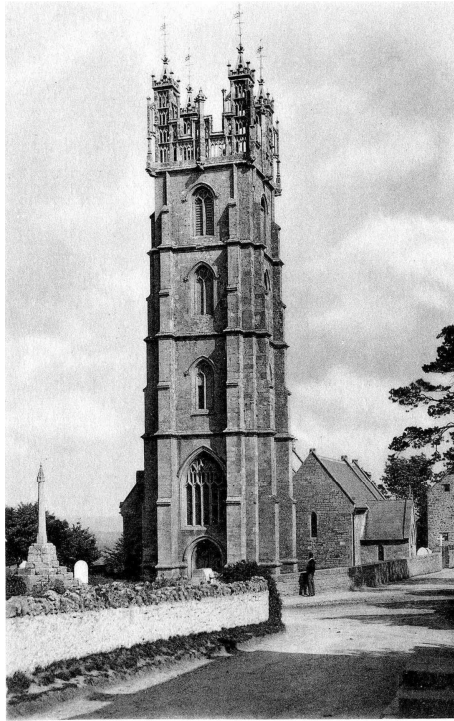
Fig. 19. Dundry
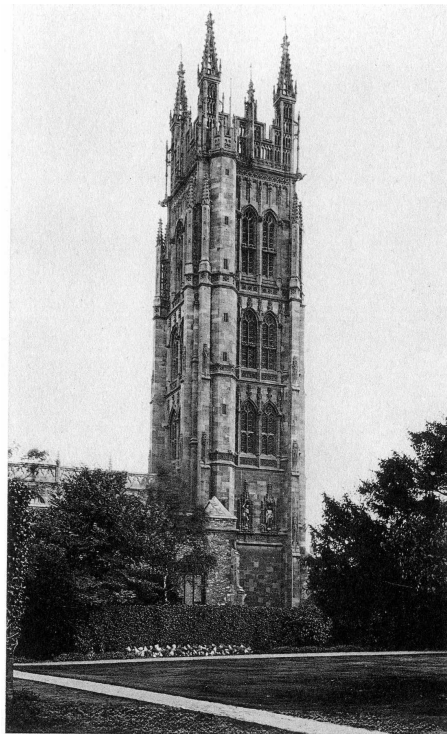
Fig. 20. Taunton, St Mary Magdalen

Designers and benefactors continued to choose western axial towers as the most common type of bell-tower throughout the later Middle Ages in England. The importance given to their designs and the ambition expressed in their forms was however far from constant. The articulation and prominence of many western towers in the tenth and eleventh centuries tended to be transferred to the twin-towered facades and central or crossing towers that were chosen for more prestigious churches in the later eleventh and twelfth centuries. In the later twelfth, thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, patrons in many parts of the country preferred to express their ambitions in the construction of increasingly tall and elaborate spires. In East Anglia, it is only from the middle of the fourteenth century that the west towers of parish churches came to be built in great numbers with square-topped, battlemented and elaborately buttressed forms. There was clearly a great shift in taste from this moment as the grand western tower became not only the dominant, but almost the exclusive choice for patrons who wished to embellish their churches with a new tower. Parishioners and other benefactors had become concerned to give their churches grand western entrances and larger, more elaborate towers provided the framework for these portals. Furthermore, they created facades for their churches where hitherto there had been none. The following chapters will examine this phenomenon and investigate how patrons and designers gave material expression to the new taste as well as the implications that building a tower had for the parish community and the rituals set in and around the parish church.

Chapter 3.

Style.

Introduction

From the top of the massive tower of Happisburgh church you can see sixteen other church towers on a clear day. The church stands on a high mound above the crumbling cliffs of the North Sea coast in an area of north-east Norfolk that is rich in great late-medieval towers, and it allows wide views over the coastal plain and inland, across the northern Norfolk Broads towards Norwich (Plate 60). A wide range of general Norfolk tower types are represented among the sixteen. Edingthorpe church has a round tower, probably of the twelfth century, wide at the base and narrowing as it was built up.[87] The bell chamber stage is octagonal and the tracery of the bell openings suggests that it was added in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth centuries.[88] Other than these openings there is only one other small window in the whole tower; that, too, was added in the late Middle Ages.

Knapton and Paston (Fig. 21) churches both have towers that, according to their forms, can be tentatively dated to the late thirteenth or first half of the fourteenth century.[89] They are simple square-plan structures constructed of flint rubble with little or no articulation or decoration. There is no base course delineation in either tower, other than the quoins at the corners, and each has only one string course as the sole attempt at surface articulation. As at Edingthorpe, neither has a west door, and the small west window and belfry openings in each case contain simple Y tracery. Both towers have similar low crenellated parapets giving them an almost identical profile. The only major difference between them is that Paston tower has a pair of simple two-stage

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[87] The dating of round towers is notoriously problematic with a range of dates from the late saxon period to the thirteenth century sometimes suggested for the same tower. For further discussion on this question, see Heywood, S., 2000, and Hart, S., 2003. In the case of Edinghthorpe I think that a date of the twelfth century is likely given the way in which the flints are regularly coursed in its construction, typical of that period. The north door is generally held to be of the late twelfth century on stylistic grounds and I think it reasonable to suppose that it may have been constructed broadly contemporaneously with the tower.

[88] This would seem to be confirmed by the bequest of 5s. to the tower by John, Rector, in 1375, NCC Heydon 112.

[89] There is no surviving documentation to date the construction of either tower.

diagonal buttresses that articulate its vertical profile, finishing little more than halfway up the structure, whereas Knapton has none. Both towers stand at about fifty-five feet tall. In their size and simplicity, they are typical of many towers constructed across Norfolk in the first half of the fourteenth century that have not been replaced or improved.

Fig. 21. Paston

The tower of Brumstead church (Plate 21) was probably nearing completion in 1390 when a bequest of 20s. was left for it and one of 6s. to the bells.[90] It is a more ambitious structure than either Knapton or Paston, distinguished by its greater size, the inclusion of a west door with an elaborately moulded frame, and large diagonal buttresses at all four corners that terminate at the level of the parapet. While the windows and belfry openings are as small as those at Knapton and Paston, more attention has been paid to the design of the tracery. In short, more relative importance was clearly attached to the detail of

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[90] Both bequests were made in the will of Drew Gerner, NCC Harsyk 130, 1390. Bequests made to bells at the time of a known tower building campaign generally indicate that the campaign was nearing completion.

the design of this church tower than those of its near neighbours constructed half a century earlier.

The majority of the towers visible from Happisburgh were built in the fifteenth century. The very large towers of Southrepps and Winterton can just be seen to the north-west and south-east respectively. Nearer are three towers that were being built at the same time as Happisburgh was going up. Documentation exists to show that money was donated towards the building of Bacton (plate 3), Walcot (Plate 145), Ingham (Plate 75) and Happisburgh towers throughout the second half of the fifteenth century.[91] All four are massive: Bacton, the lowest, standing at just over eighty-five feet, while Happisburgh, at one hundred and ten feet tall, dominates the surrounding area from its prominent position. They are wide, as well, and this width in their lower stages is emphasised by large diagonal buttresses that project boldly from the western angles of the main structures. In each case the steps in the buttresses are underlined by prominent string courses that divide the towers into four clear stages that balance the height of the buildings with strong horizontal elements and contribute to a sense of solidity and mass. All four towers rise from moulded plinths with decorated base courses and terminate in crenellated parapets of varying degrees of elaboration. The openings are larger and more ambitious than in the earlier towers mentioned above. All four have impressive west doors set in moulded frames, three of them at least nine and a half feet high. The main west windows are grand in all four

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[91] Bacton: 1459, 6s.8d. to fabric of tower, William Lanell, NFK Grey 4; 1465 3s.4d. to new tower, John Ball, NCC Jekkys 15; 1468, bequest to tower, John Kern, NCC Jekkys 131; 1471, 33s.4d. to edify new tower, John Barker, NFK Grey 292; 1476 20s. to new steeple, William Lessy, NFK Grey 301;1479 20s. to reparation of steeple, William Lessy, NFK Grey 301; 1482, 6s.8d. to reparation of steeple, Henry Lessy, NCC A Caston 125; 1485 6s. to church and construction of tower, Henry Lessy, NCC A Caston 125

Walcot: 1453, 20s. to reparation and building of tower, Thomas Sowter, NCC Aleyn 158; 1474, 6s.8d. to building tower, Walter Cook, NFK Grey 384.

Inhgam: 1456, 40s. to building tower, Ela Brewes, NCC Brosyard 23; 1456, 4 bushells malt to tower, Andrew Cock, NCC Brosyard 14; 1467 6s8d. to edify new tower, Henry Avelyn, NFK Grey 218; 1469, 2 bushells malt to building tower, Thomas Halle, NFK Grey 216; 1473, 3s.4d. to building new tower, Sibille Langford, NFK Grey 304; 1485, 3s.4d. to building tower, Thomas Franceys, NFK Liber 1 58; 1489 6s.8d. to edify tower, Roger King, NCC Wolman 31; 1492, reparation of steeple, Thomas Sowde, NFK Liber 1 98; 1494, 6s.8d. to bells, Agnes Aylward, NFK Liber 1 108; 1512 3s.4d. to making steeple, Christian Beer, NFK Sparhawk 154; 1533 1 comb of wheat to making battlement of tower, Thomas Leme, NFK Gillior 71.

Happisburgh; 1480, 8 marks to emend and sustain church and tower, John Chamberlain, NCC Aubry 56.

examples and are articulated with complex tracery patterns (Plate 75a). With the exception of Walcot, the west windows are integrated in framing devices with the doors beneath them, creating a unity of composition. The belfry openings are also more prominent as are the square sound holes, each with complicated tracery.

An initial appraisal of the towers in this part of the county would suggest that those constructed in the later Middle Ages had a greater degree of importance in relation to the rest of the churches to which they are attached than those built in earlier times. Thus these towers show more ambition than the equivalent structures of previous centuries. The degree of structural and superficial elaboration in the designs is rarely seen in parish church towers constructed before the middle of the fourteenth century in Norfolk.

At first glance it is tempting to classify towers such as Happisburgh, Ingham, Bacton and Walcot as belonging to a group with similar formal qualities. They share very similar general profiles and elevations as a result of the design of buttresses, parapets and string courses, giving an impression of similarly articulated mass. Yet a closer examination of the constituent elements of these towers reveals that there are many differences in the details of design and craftsmanship, particularly in those parts such as mouldings and window tracery that required a mason to carve a pattern from freestone.

It is the aim of this chapter to investigate just such questions of form and style in the wider context of the sample group of church towers chosen for the project and to analyse the physical evidence in the light of the debate about architectural style and classification. The aim of this analysis is to elucidate the nature of the design process, the interplay between patron and craftsman in that process, and shed further light on the transmission of architectural forms and designs.

The historiography of the classification of medieval architectural styles has been well rehearsed. Paul Crossley, in the introduction to his revision of Frankl's magisterial *Gothic Architecture,* identifies the four headings under which Frankl divided his analysis of Gothic style in 1914: spatial form,

mechanical forces, optical form and purposive intention.[92] The fourth of these categories is not concerned with the descriptive analysis of form and thus questions of function and motivation are best discussed elsewhere than under a style heading. However the other three heads are all concerned with description of form. The first addresses the architectural organisation of space, the second deals with how physical forces and stresses are supported and transmitted, and how these forces are expressed architecturally by walls, buttresses, ribs and columns, while the third is concerned with what the observer perceives in a building, its apparent qualities and with the way that architectural elements are articulated so that perception is affected. This means, in effect, an examination of the form of such elements as tracery, arches, moulding profiles, and so on.

Leaving aside the usefulness of this division of ideas and whether it is desirable to search for the truth of things that cannot be perceived, it becomes clear after a reflection on Frankl's philosophy of Gothic style that the historiography of English stylistic analysis focuses very much on the superficial qualities of medieval architecture, particularly on window tracery and on moulding profiles, and to a lesser extent on arch shapes and wall articulation. It is treated like the taxonomy of plant or animal species. And as it has sought to identify a set of common forms and to circumscribe them according to period, unlike Frankl, it has been bedevilled by the notion of the evolution of style. This is consistent with its roots in the intellectual prerogatives of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when naturalists, botanists and zoologists were developing taxonomies and classifying their subjects according to appearance. At this time James Dallaway was offering a taxonomic framework for English ecclesiastical architecture in his *Observations on English Architecture*[93] that can be seen as the starting point of a process that by the middle of the century resulted in the familiar classification of Gothic architecture that is still broadly adhered to today.[94] The terms Early English, Decorated (with its subdivisions Geometric and Curvilinear) and Perpendicular used to describe discrete styles of English medieval architecture are not only descriptive terms, but also chronological ones. The problems inherent in trying to organise a classification

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[92] Frankl, P., 2000, pp 9,10.
[93] Dallaway, J., *Observations on English Architecture,* London, 1806.
[94] The history of this process of classification is well summarised in Harvey, J., *The Perpendicular Style,* London, 1978, pp 26-33.

that respects both strict taxonomical as well as chronological imperatives will be considered later in the chapter, in the light of the material evidence of the sample group of towers. It is sufficient to note at this point that in devising a matrix which supposes that date and form are necessarily related the classifiers were reinforcing the idea that a form expresses the spirit of its age. This notion is problematic in that it ignores the evident reality that in any age there are conservatives as well as innovators amongst the ranks of designers and creators, and that their desires and requirements are expressed in different material forms contemporaneously. It seems that in devising a linear, evolutionary development of architectural forms classifiers have tailored some criteria in order to ignore such inconvenient difficulties.

The other main goal of those who adopt a strictly taxonomical approach to the study of medieval church architecture in England is to attribute buildings or parts of buildings to architects or master masons. The main impetus behind this line of research in the second half of the twentieth century was given by John Harvey in his *Dictionary of English Medieval Architects*, first published in 1954, in which he sought to fabricate a Vasarian account of the lives and works of certain named architects of the later Middle Ages.[95] Indeed, later, in *The Perpendicular Style,* he attached a whole period in his classification of architectural style to the name of one "architect" in a chapter entitled "The Age of Henry Yeveley 1360 – 1400".[96]

Whereas Harvey worked on the basis that the names of master masons were attached to specific building projects in contemporary documents and hypothesised that their work could be recognised in those buildings and thus in other buildings of similar style, other scholars have started their attempts at attribution from the remaining material evidence. Such an approach to the ecclesiastical architecture of the late middle ages in Norfolk was made by Richard Fawcett.[97] Fawcett's thesis was predicated on the belief that the work of individual architects could be traced in the close similarity in design elements such as moulding profiles and window tracery patterns. These were constituent

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[95] Harvey, J., *English Medieval Architects: A Biographical Dictionary Down To 1550* (Revised edition), Gloucester, 1987.
[96] Harvey, J., 1978, pp 97 – 136.
[97] Fawcett, R., *Late Gothic Architecture in Norfolk*, UEA Ph.D. Thesis, 1975.

parts of a greater design that Fawcett held were of interest in their minutiae only to the master mason or architect who designed them rather than to the patrons who would have made up the other part of the design dialectic. In other words, the architect revealed himself in the way he designed the smallest details rather as a painter can be recognised from the way he applies the brush to the canvas, or the way in which he draws the shape of an ear or finger.[98] Fawcett summarised his position thus:

> Since the use of identical mouldings depends on the use of identical
> templates, it is reasonable to conclude that if buildings share common
> details the same architect was at work in each of them, and from this
> patterns of work can be built up.[99]

This is a usefully explicit statement of the approach which will be appraised after the style and design of the sample group of towers have been analysed.

So, how should the question of the analysis of form be essayed in the case of the group of church towers that is the subject of this research? The attempt to identify a style is the search for the commonality of repeated forms and this is clearly an important objective in the descriptive process. But it should not be the only aim. The acceptance of heterogeneity of form should be allowed in the descriptive framework and not be compromised by a programme that seeks to classify only according to similarity. A church tower can be seen as an aggregation of constituent elements - walls, buttresses, parapets, base courses, tower arches, doors and moulded door frames, and windows, sound holes, belfry openings and their respective tracery designs - which can all be subjected to descriptive analysis. However, it is important to remember, once it has been disaggregated for the purpose of this study, that a tower was meant as a complete monument and should be considered as such. Attention must be directed to the aesthetic unity of the building as well as those separate elements that have traditionally been held to be indicators of a particular style. My approach is predicated on the notion that such an analysis can shed light upon the material choices available to the designers and patrons of these towers and allow an appraisal of how forms were used, borrowed and adapted over time.

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[98] This is an approach to attribution in the tradition of Giovanni Morelli, see Morelli, G., *Italian Painters*, London, 1892 -3.
[99] Fawcett, R., 1975, p 11.

General tower form: Dimensions, Buttresses, String Courses and Parapets

When viewing from a distance an observer first notices the outline or profile of a building. In the case of late medieval church towers this impression is largely governed by the dimensions of the building, in particular the width of the tower relative to its height, and the design of the buttresses together with the parapet and pinnacles that crown the structure. From the middle of the fourteenth century buttresses were designed that narrowed as they rose in height in a succession of steps or stages. As the average height of parish church towers in Norfolk increased throughout the late Middle Ages and larger bell frames accommodated a heavier peal of bells it became increasingly necessary to support the tower structure with larger buttressing. Although it was a structural necessity, this buttressing presented an opportunity for designers to adopt an array of aesthetic solutions in articulating the overall profile of their tower design. Whereas towers constructed before the middle of the fourteenth century in Norfolk largely either lacked buttressing or were supported by simple two stage examples, the majority of those built from the last quarter of the century onwards have larger and more elaborate buttresses with four or five stages that contribute in a fundamental way to the appearance and character of the building. Together with the slenderness of the structure they define the overall profile of a tower. The slenderness is not a function of the absolute height, but of the height relative to the width and is reinforced by the arrangement of the parapet and pinnacles, which can help to draw the eye further up the tower emphasising verticality.

The great majority of towers in the sample group, 128 out of 164, are between 5 metres and 7 metres wide at the base of their west sides.[100] Few are

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[100] It is often difficult to estimate the precise width of a tower excluding the buttresses. If the buttresses are arranged in pairs at right angles to the corner of the tower the width is generally the distance between each set of corner buttresses together with the width of the faces of the buttresses. Sometimes the buttresses are set back from the corner of the tower exposing that corner in the angle of the buttresses. This section can then be added to the total width. If the buttresses are single diagonal buttresses set at 45 degrees to the corner of the tower, the distance between the buttresses should be added to half the width of the face of each buttress to give the total width of the tower.

square, with most, 130, being more than 20 centimetres narrower at the base of their north and south faces. Walcott, at 6.58 metres across its west face and 5.56 metres wide on the north and south sides, is an extreme example, whereas North Elmham is the most regular of all the sample towers in the dimensions of its ground plan, being perfectly square at 6 metres in each direction with eight buttresses (external and internal) each 0.90 metres wide and 1.52 metres deep. The range of heights is much greater however, from Stratton Strawless at 14.33 metres to Cromer at 48.15 metres.[101] 142 towers stand between 17 metres and 27 metres tall, with 12 standing at over 30.5 metres or one hundred feet. Most of these hundred footers can be found in the north and east of the county, many of them near the coast, and the dates of construction, where they can be ascertained, show an even chronological distribution, from St Giles on the Hill in Norwich[102], started in the last decades of the fourteenth century to Happisburgh, under construction in 1480 as detailed above.[103] (Fig. 5) The high incidence of tall towers built on or very near the coast raises the possibility that they were designed to be visible from the sea and act as 'sea marks', navigational reference points. It must be borne in mind that parishes near the coast were often wealthier than the average and that the building of larger towers may have been partly motivated by parochial pride and the desire to display wealth, yet the elongated forms of such towers as Happisburgh and Winterton (Plate 158), and the positioning of other tall towers, such as Blakeney (Plate 13), which is on a rise overlooking what was once a busy but narrow harbour entrance, strongly suggest that they were designed to be seen from ships at sea.

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[101] All tower heights were measured to the underside of the parapet during the research. This is a practical consideration in that I used a laser to measure height and it was necessary to bounce the beam off a surface. The only available point that could be used was the cornice on the underside of the parapet. This, at least, has the advantage of being consistent in every case and it was possible to measure each tower in this way.

[102] In 1386 30 shillings were left to the "emendation" of the nave: Stephen de Holt, NCC Harsyk 78. The style of the moulding of the tower arch is similar, though not identical to the nave arcade which was probably the object of the 1386 donation. The way in which the moulding of the western bay of the nave interacts with that of the tower arch, together with the arrangement of the external western walls of the naves – a continuation of the masonry and buttressing of the tower, suggests strongly that the tower was started before the new nave arcade, though not by much. A date of around 1375 - 1380 is therefore likely. This would be consistent with the design of the tracery in the west window. Blomefield records that in 1424 Robert de Dunston ordered his second wife, Margaret, to give £5 to the tower: Blomefield, 1805, vol. 4, p 239. This is consistent with the lengthy periods that large towers usually took to complete.

[103] Absolute dimensions are considered further in Chapter 5 in the context of an analysis of construction costs.

The range of height to width ratios is surprisingly wide. This can be partially accounted for by modification to initial plans and ambitions. It is clear that a number of towers were originally planned to be taller than they were finally built. This can be understood not only from the modifications in their fabric and material forms, but most clearly from the ambition displayed in their base course dimensions. The case of Stratton Strawless (Plate 135) is instructive: bearing in mind that the tower is only 14.33 metres high, the width at the base of the west face of the tower is an impressive 6.78 metres, almost identical to the base width at Heydon, a tower that rises to 24.07 metres. However, Felmingham (Plate 43), four miles to the north-east, is similarly wide at the base, 6.52 metres, and is only a couple of metres taller than Stratton Strawless. Both look as if they were originally designed to incorporate another stage in their construction, yet were never completed to that design. Even if such apparently incomplete towers are ignored in this analysis, it is evident that there was no concept of an ideal or conventional ratio of width to height at this time in Norfolk. A church tower could be as little as 2.4 times taller than it is wide at the base, as in the case of South Acre (Plate 130), or as much as 5 times, as in the cases of Cromer (Plate 30) and Scottow (Plate 126). The great neighbouring towers of Salle (Plate 122a) and Cawston (Plate 27a), both over one hundred feet tall and often compared one to another, differ in their relative dimensions. Cawston is 3.6 times as tall as its base width, whereas at Salle the ratio is 4:1. This in part accounts for the very different appearance of the two towers, despite broadly similar arrangement of the buttresses. Salle has a slenderer profile and does not convey an impression of mass to the same extent that Cawston does. The latter structure's lack of a parapet or pinnacles exaggerates this impression, nevertheless it is surprising to discover, after surveying both towers, that Cawston is ten feet higher at the top of the bell chamber.

It is difficult to isolate any patterns in the relative dimensions of towers within the sample group, either in terms of geography or chronology, with the exception of a number of towers built in an arc curving from fifteen miles north-west to seventeen miles north-east of Norwich, all documented as objects of

bequests in the three decades from 1460.[104] This group comprises Northrepps, Bacton, Walcott, Foulsham, Wood Dalling, Happisburgh, Erpingham and Ingham. Each is between 26 and 33.5 metres tall and all are around 4.2 times as tall as they are wide. The similarity in their relative proportions ensures that they share a similar profile and generate a similar impression of mass and verticality. The design of the individual elements and details of these towers is quite different, though, and it looks unlikely that any two of them were the works of the same master mason or architect, but rather the products of a consensus on the desirability of general tower form shared by their patrons or designers at a particular time and place. A similar tendency towards homogeneity of general form can be seen in other parts of England where grand towers were also commissioned in the fifteenth century. In Somerset and the West Country generally, for example, larger and more elaborate tower designs expressed a tendency towards greater slenderness, further emphasised by the introduction of an intermediate stage below the bell chamber, and by a great sense of verticality in the form of parapets and pinnacles. Chew Magna and Batheaston (Fig. 22) are fine examples of this widespread trend.

The arrangement of buttresses influences the general impression made by a tower as much as any other element in the design. Buttresses are fundamentally important both structurally as well as aesthetically; indeed, following Frankl's lead, it may be said that the two factors, structure and aesthetics, should not be disaggregated, but both considered as integral to the style of the building. As towers were built taller from the second half of the fourteenth century, buttressing became necessary to ensure that these costly projects were not doomed to collapse and render the benefactors' generosity wasted. It is not surprising that the first design detail that was stipulated in the contract for the building of Walberswick tower in Suffolk was that there should be four buttresses.[105] They can be perceived not only as delineating the outline of a tower, but also as an expression of the mass of the tower, conveying the thrust of the weight of the masonry downwards and outwards. This sense of mass and

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[104] See Cattermole and Cotton, 1983, pp 235 – 279, for details of the bequests made to these church towers.
[105] Salzman, L. F., *Building in England Down to 1540,* Oxford, 1967, pp 499 - 500

solidity is an impression that is more noticeable in East Anglian towers than in the great parish church towers that were built in the same period in other parts of the country. Building with flint rubble and lime mortar presented challenges to masons in Norfolk that were different from those faced by the craftsmen using freestone in Somerset or Lincolnshire, for example.[106] Nevertheless, those who designed towers in the county made a virtue out of a necessity and the exploitation of buttresses as a dominant aesthetic element in the design is one of the features of these buildings.

Fig. 22. Batheaston

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[106] These are explored in chapter 5.

There were three types of buttress employed in the design of towers in the sample group. The most numerous type is the diagonal buttress; a single buttress that projects from each corner of the tower at an angle to the faces of the tower, usually of about 45 degrees in each direction. 128 of the 164 towers are buttressed by this general form. Less common are angle buttresses: paired at the corners of the building at right angles, employed in the design of thirty-one towers. Only two towers, Redenhall (Plate 116a) and the west tower at Wymondham have polygonal buttresses that wrap around the corners of the tower in an octagonal section, with five faces of the octagon facing out. The remaining three towers in the sample lack any form of buttressing.

The choice of any of these types was only a starting point in the design of the buttresses of a tower. The basic forms would have been influenced by the structural needs of the project together with the funds available, but the aesthetic possibilities available within that framework were numerous. Previous attempts at a descriptive analysis of parish church towers, most notably by F.J. Allen in *The Great Church Towers of England,*[107] have tended to overlook these nuances of detail and have classified towers according to the three general buttress types. However, it is clear from the first examination that buttresses could be arranged in a variety of ways to create very different visual aspects.

Buttresses were built in steps or stages, wider at the base of the tower and narrowing towards the top. The transition from one stage to the next is usually marked by a sill or set-off carved from freestone, steeply inclined and articulated with louvering, as at Foulsham (Plate 47a). Most commonly diagonal buttresses have four stages, as exhibited on 78 of 128 towers. The main variations rest in the size of the buttresses, the distance they project from the walls of the tower, their upper termination points and the treatment of their materials and decoration.

The thickness of the buttress is generally a function of the size of the tower and does not seem to have been an aesthetic consideration in the design process. However, the distances that buttresses project vary greatly, even when towers of similar dimensions are compared. At New Buckenham, a tower of 20.90 metres, the four-stage diagonal buttresses at the western corners of the

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[107] Allen, F.J., *The Great Church Towers of England,* Cambridge, 1932.

tower project 1.80 metres immediately above the base course moulding. At Northrepps, in contrast, buttresses of similar conformation project 1.60 metres, yet the tower is considerably taller at around 25 metres. The set-offs at New Buckenham (Plate 91b) are emphasised by deeply projecting sills and exaggerated louvering that create a degree of shadow at the transition from one stage of the buttress to the next that is minimal at North Repps (Plate 98b). The overall effect is to create a sense of progression from a massive base at New Buckenham, where the steps upward are strongly emphasised. At Northrepps the vertical progression is smoother and despite its greater size the tower seems to be less massive.

There is little evidence of strong geographical or chronological patterns in this comparative category. Both deep and shallow buttresses are employed from the beginning to the end of the period, so it seems that there was no particular fashion for articulating towers with an exaggerated stepped profile at any particular period. This may be explained, to an extent, by the time that was necessary to complete the building of a tower. Smaller, easily copiable motifs that could make a sudden appearance in a district can be subject to fashionable imitation much more readily than large structural elements whose full aesthetic effect would not be revealed until the whole building was nearing completion, often several decades after the start of the campaign. However, some local patterns do emerge: the towers of four Norwich churches, three located on the same street, exhibit strong formal similarities in the buttressing that must be more than coincidental. St Clement Fyebridge (Plate 101), St George Colegate (Plate 102), St Michael Coslany (Plate 109) (all built along Colegate) and St John de Sepulchre (Plate 105) each has similarly shallow, four-step, diagonal buttressing that progresses at similar intervals and terminates at the parapet.[108] The three Colegate churches have projecting stair turrets that rise to the full height of the towers at the north-east corner, whereas a similar stair turret was built at the south-east corner of the tower at St John de Sepulchre. St Clement, St George and St John have crenellated parapets, into the knapped flint facing of which are set three large freestone lozenges under the merlons and two smaller ones under the crenels (Plate 105a). (The parapet at St Michael is entirely

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[108] Each set of buttresses has been re-pointed and much of the superficial material, especially the quoins, is not original, rendering a comparative analysis of the masonry impossible.

replaced.) In all three examples the lozenges are carved with low relief geometrical motifs, religious symbols or monograms, many of which are, unfortunately, replacements. In each case the three larger lozenges are surrounded by small freestone shields, upon which no carving can be discerned. Exactly the same scheme for the parapet can be found at Erpingham, where, however, the rest of the tower is very different (Plate 40b). The designs of these four city towers are so similar in the aesthetic vision of the general form of the building that it seems reasonable to conclude that there was an element of imitation or even of shared attribution in their planning. However the arrangement of the openings and the tracery patterns are dissimilar, and though St Clement shares many tracery elements with St George they were clearly produced by different craftsmen. This leads to the probable conclusion that the similarities are products of copying rather than of shared workmanship. This would be much easier to verify if there were any extant deeds to document the patronage or building of any of these towers, but unfortunately there are not.

Thirty-one towers in the sample have angle buttresses paired at the corners of the main tower structure. These were usually attached to grander and more ambitious towers, presumably because they provide more support and were funded by patrons willing to spend more money on the project. An observer has a different impression of a tower buttressed in this way. From whatever angle a tower with diagonal buttresses is viewed it retains a stepped profile, whereas the profile of a tower with angle buttresses changes more subtly as the viewer moves around it. Viewed obliquely to any of the faces of the tower the sense of stepping or progression of the buttresses is nearly lost, but becomes very strong again as one moves towards a frontal view. If a tower is approached directly from the west, a pair of large angle buttresses can create a sense of discrete space directly in front of the west portal, in a way that more open diagonal buttresses cannot. If this part of the tower displays a frieze of heraldry or religious imagery above the portal, as is often the case, the sense of projection of religious space beyond the physical boundaries of the building is noticeable. At Salle this sense is so strong that one can almost describe this type of space as an open exonarthex.

Angle buttresses were used on towers built in Norfolk throughout the late Middle Ages. At St Giles-on-the-Hill in Norwich, Worstead (Plate 161a) and Winterton they date from the late fourteenth century and at Hingham, built

before the sample period, they can be found supporting a tower started by Remigius de Hethersett in the 1350s that was still being funded in 1375.[109] Hingham tower (Fig. 23) has a prominent stair turret that projects above the top of the parapet, a motif that was subsequently abandoned in Norfolk, while remaining popular in other parts of the country.

Fig. 23. Hingham

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[109] See Cattermole and Cotton, 1983, p 251.

Angle buttresses then appear at Salle and Cawston in the first decades of the fifteenth century, Southrepps and Deopham in the middle of the century, and at Felmingham in the first decades of the sixteenth century. There seem to be no discernible geographical or chronological patterns in the use of angle buttresses, but rather they are connected to the ambitions of patrons and the prestige of the project. In almost every case they support grand and elaborate towers. The most modest example is that of the tower at Felmingham, though it is clear that it was intended to be built taller. Documentation suggests that it was probably only truncated by the changing priorities of parishioners in the wake of the Reformation.[110] Most other towers with angle buttresses are either exceptionally tall as at Cromer, Winterton, Southrepps and St Giles, Norwich, or impress with their elaboration – St Peter Mancroft in Norwich, Deopham and Swaffham being examples. If the buttresses are set back a short distance from the angle of the tower to allow the corner of the main structure to appear between them an extra element emphasising verticality is added to the design. The exposed corner can be carried up between the buttresses as a square shaft, adding complexity and shadow to the upward thrust. There are 19 towers with these corner shafts, with no apparent geographical or chronological clustering. It seems that the designer of St Giles chose this motif, but it peters out rather feebly above the second set-off. It is handed much more boldly at South Repps, Cawston and Swaffham (Plate 137a). There are few towers with angle buttresses that could be described as mundane, although Martham and Mattishall would not stand out from the crowd if it were not for their buttresses and, in the latter case, unusual window tracery.

Another choice to be made by tower designers was whether to carry the buttresses up to the full height of the tower. There are a number of towers dating from the beginning of the sample period where the buttresses terminate at the bottom of the bell chamber. It was only structurally necessary to take them up so far as there is very little mass to be supported and stress to be diffused above this point. The great oak bell frames that carry the great weight of the bells sit on the

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[110] Numerous bequests dating from 1522 to 1546 are evidence of a tower building campaign that started shortly before the Henrician Reformation, Cattermole and Cotton, 1983, p 246. A last bequest of 1546 leaving £10 "to making up and finishing the tower", John Whytewell, NCC Whytefoote 210, probably coincides with a campaign to have the tower roofed and made secure, rather than any desire to see it completed to its original design.

thickness of the walls at the bottom of the bell chamber. Below this point the walls are massive, but above it their thickness is very much reduced, sometimes to as little as 45 centimetres. Whether or not the designers were concerned only with structural imperatives, the effect of leaving tall bell chambers unbuttressed produced a radically different impression from those towers where the buttressing reaches the parapet. At St Giles, Norwich, where the bell chamber is unusually tall and the belfry openings correspondingly large the effect is very dynamic (Plate 104). This treatment is highly unusual and finds a parallel in only one other tower in Norfolk, at Swanton Morley (Plate 138), where the bell chamber is relatively even more massive and the great belfry openings contain very similar tracery to that at St Giles, even if there is exceptionally shallow buttressing that continues a few metres higher. Both towers probably date from the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth centuries and it is likely that their strong formal relationship is more than casual. However, this daring motif of a dominant upper stage projecting above the buttresses was not followed in Norfolk, perhaps as a result of concerns about the solidity of the structure on the part of those putting up the funds. Where bell chamber stages remain unbuttressed in later towers they tend to be far less ambitious than those at St Giles or Swanton Morley, as can be seen at Hockering, Fincham, Alburgh or Loddon, for example. At these towers the upper stage is comparatively short and the belfry openings unremarkable, and the effect of their projection above the level of the buttresses is very different from that created by St Giles. In fact, the choice made to terminate the buttressing at the lower point is probably utilitarian and driven by the desire to limit spending.

Many other towers have buttresses that do not reach the parapet, but end at some point against the wall of the bell chamber. A variety of different termination points can be seen at Banningham, Martham, East Tuddenham and West Tofts. Commonly, the termination point is just below the level of the parapet, no more than a couple of feet lower at New Buckenham, Erpingham and Northrepps. This decision may have been influenced by the problem of how to manage the difficult transition between buttresses, parapet and pinnacles. Fewer than half of the towers in the sample, 62 of 164, have buttresses that continue to, and occasionally through, the parapet. One common solution was to make no aesthetic concessions to the problem and have the buttresses re-enter at the level

of the parapet with the same type of set-off that had been used lower in the structure as, for example, at Ditchingham, Foulsham or Grimston. Another choice available to the designer was to articulate the parapet to extend the diagonal course of the buttress upwards and provide a strong platform for a corner pinnacle as at Blakeney (Plate 13), or to allow it to project through the parapet as at Castle Acre (Plate 26). This latter tower also exhibits the solution which was often chosen to the question of how to integrate angle buttresses with the parapet. More often than not, angle buttresses terminate at the bell chamber stage and are continued to the parapet as diagonal buttresses, the Castle Acre model, or as pilasters as at St Giles in Norwich. This transition is often awkward, especially when massive angle buttresses progress to very weak diagonal ones at the upper stage, as can be seen quite clearly at North Elmham (Plate 95) and Mattishall. At the other extreme is Deopham, where the angle buttresses continue very strongly up to the parapet and then step back sharply to merge with polygonal corner turrets (Plate 32). At Deopham the buttresses are massive and curiously those that project west from the tower are nearly double the depth of their pairs and those buttresses on the eastern side of the tower. These western buttresses are not attached to the tower in a simple right angle, but they are chamfered so that there is a solid triangle of flint rubble masonry in the angle between buttress and main structure. This was copied from neighbouring Hingham where the same design was used a century earlier, just as the decorative vine scroll around the base course was copied from the same source. The result is that, viewed from the west, the tower of Deopham church appears to have two polygonal masses at its corners.

Two churches, Redenhall (Plate 116a) and Wymondham (Plate 163), have towers with polygonal or turret buttresses. This motif was introduced into East Anglia at Stoke by Nayland in Suffolk in the first half of the fifteenth century and was developed further at Bungay and Laxfield (Fig. 3), both in Suffolk, before being adopted at Redenhall, and then at Eye in Suffolk.[111] Laxfield, Redenhall and Eye make up a group with very strong formal similarities, not only in their buttressing, but also in the arrangement of their openings and elaborate treatment of surface decoration. Wymondham, however,

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[111] For approximate dates of these towers see Harvey, 1978, p 229 and Allen, 1932, p 185, 186.

is entirely different and its design seems to have drawn inspiration from outside the region. The buttresses progress in five stages with almost no set-off from one stage to the next, so that they appear to rise almost vertically. They are banded into ten stages by string courses and do not meet the faces of the tower with a chamfered section as do the buttresses at the other towers. Wymondham's singularity is not confined to its buttressing, but also to the design of its openings. The great west window is divided in two by a massive vertical bar of masonry, far too large to be considered a normal tracery mullion, and there are double bell chamber openings framed by an ogee arch that appear nowhere else in Norfolk, but are to be found at a number of churches in the north midlands, such as Hawton in Nottinghamshire and Elvaston (Fig. 24) in Derbyshire as well as at Tetney in Lincolnshire.[112] Double bell chamber openings are found on Suffolk towers, but are framed by segmented arches, as at Elmswell or Laxfield, not ogees.

Fig. 24. Elvaston

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[112] Suffolk has many double-headed belfry openings, either framed by segmented arches as at Elmswell, dripmould courses as at Eye, or unframed as at Falkenham. However, none are framed by ogee arches.

It is evident, both from material evidence as well as documentation, that towers often took many decades to complete, if they were completed at all. The general form of a tower would have been fixed by the vision of the original designers; there would have been relatively little leeway for later patrons and builders to have altered the overall shape and size of a tower once the lower stages had been completed. The single element of a tower with which a subsequent designer would have had free rein to express original aesthetic solutions, though, would have been the parapet and its adornments. As these were often added such a long time after the body of the tower had been designed, their design was not necessarily constrained by the taste exhibited below, nor were they, in many cases, compromised by a need to carry an aesthetic unity upwards.[113]

The main consideration in marrying the design of a parapet and its pinnacles to the form of the main part of the tower is the arrangement of the buttresses. If they reach to the full height of the tower then the parapet should be designed to take account of the vertical thrust that they impart if it is not to appear disconnected. If they terminate at the bottom of the belfry stage or at some intermediate point the parapet is not bound to the tower in any other way than that it sits four-square on top of it. It is interesting that there are almost as many different solutions to the problem of how to design the transition from a bell-chamber with strong, full-height diagonal buttresses to its parapet as there are towers that express this transition.

While the design of the transition from buttress to parapet and pinnacle never seems to have been resolved to the extent that certain solutions were often repeated, another choice in buttress design was almost universally adopted. Of 164 towers recorded only 21 do not feature some form of crenellation on the parapet, and of those, 8 do not have any parapet at all and must be considered incomplete. The crenellation exhibited on parapets takes a variety of forms and degrees of elaboration, ranging from a simple range of four merlons and three crenels of equal height or depth, as at Burnham Thorpe and Horsham St Faith (Plate 74), seen on 40 towers, to the variably stepped crenellations on the

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[113] It must be noted at this point that many parapets as they stand today are the work of later centuries, most commonly of the nineteenth and twentieth. If access to the parapet is not available it is not always easy to detect the presence of later work.

parapets of a group of churches in the east of the county, most notably at Filby (Plate 45) and Ormesby St Margaret, both situated in an area of Norfolk with a strong local identity known as The Fleggs. This steeply raked crenellation creates a dominant feature in the centre of each side of the parapet that appears to mimic the stepped gables of vernacular buildings in the Low Countries, a motif that was taken up on the eastern seaboard of East Anglia in the late Middle Ages in such buildings as Hales Hall Barn. Between these extremes there are a number of variations on the crenellation theme, including wide shallow merlons as at Griston and Scottow, pairs of merlons attached to the corner pinnacles separated by very wide crenels at New Buckenham, emphasising the verticality of the corners of the tower, and very wide and deep merlons separated by narrow crenels at Sparham.

There are only two examples of pierced parapets in the sample, at the proximate towers of Swaffham (Plate 137b) and Hilborough (Plate 65a) churches. The formal similarity of these parapets is striking, both in the general arrangement of their stepped crenellation as well as in the detail of the design of the forms that make up the pierced work below the sill of the crenellations. The motif of the double-crocketted spire framed by an open lancet, cusped at Swaffham, and the open square quatrefoils enclosing shields at Hilborough, and cubes cut in low relief at Swaffham, are too alike to be coincidental. Without close examination of the fabric, a task that would require scaffolding, it is difficult to make a definitive judgement, though the similarity in the quality of the workmanship as well as the obvious design similarities of the smaller details suggest that the same mason worked on both parapets. Very helpfully there is documentation that allows us to date and attribute the work of the Swaffham parapet. A number of bequests in the first and second decades of the sixteenth century indicate that the bells were ready to be hung from the bellframe of the grand new tower and thus it must have been nearing completion.[114] Then, after a period of a decade and a half or so, not an untypical pause, there is a bequest of £20 to battlement of steeple or a north porch made by Robert Batman, suggesting

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[114] In 1508, 6s. 8d. was left to the steeple and 6s. 8d. to "framyng of the bellys" by Thomas Wade, NFK Shaw 182. In 1513 Isabell Taylor made a bequest to "reparation belles…if it so be they be sett and the stepill in her framys, NFK Sparhawk 291.

that there was a concern to see the tower finished at this time.[115] Importantly, and unusually, the churchwardens' accounts corroborate and illuminate the testamentary evidence. They recount that in 1508 a contract was made to roof the tower and that the roof was leaded in 1510. The leading was carried out by a plumber, Richard English, under the supervision of either of two master masons, Giles or John Patryck. The bellframe was installed in 1515 and the bells hung in the next two years by Edmund Aleyn of Elsing. Crucially the accounts also tell that the battlement was the work of a freemason named Cobbe in 1533/4.[116] There are two tantalising references to the tower at Hilborough in the Norfolk will registers, the first a bequest to the "reparation" of bells in 1474, a date that would tally with the building of the tower by Sir John Clifton whose arms are displayed over the west door; the second a bequest to the "reparation of the steeple" made in 1541.[117] This material and documentary evidence strongly suggests that the parapet was constructed much later than the rest of the tower at Hilborough, as was often the case, and was designed and built by the same mason, Cobbe, who made the very similar pierced parapet at Swaffham a few years earlier.[118] However, if this is the same mason as the Robert Cobb who worked in Cambridge at King's and St John's Colleges in the preceding decades, and who died in 1537, there is a problem with the chronology. Either the will made in 1541 does not refer to work on the Hilborough parapet or the work of one or other of the parapets is a very fine and closely observed copy executed by a different craftsman.

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[115]   1529, Robert Batman, NCC Palgrave 58.

[116] The Swaffham Churchwardens' accounts; Norfolk Record Office Parish Deposit 52/7. Given the paucity of information of this quality in most other churchwardens' accounts, it is encouraging to note how well the information contained therein corroborates the conclusions drawn from the testamentary evidence – the main primary source for most tower building campaigns.

[117] 1474 12d. to reparation of bells, John Ledale, NFK Grey 391; 1541 13s. to reparation of steeple, William Peper, NCC Deyns 176.
In Cattermole and Cotton, 1983, n. 38, p 278, records that Mr. A.B. Whittingham points out that in his will Sir John Clifton (d.1447) directed that his estates were to remain in his executors' hands for 12 years, suggesting a possible source of funding for the building of Hilborough church. This would agree with the material evidence and would be consistent with a date of 1474 for the funding of the bells.
[118]Robert Cobb(e) was a mason of Cambridge who worked on both King's College Chapel and St John's College Chapels. However, he died in 1537, Harvey, 1987, pp 62, 63. If the Cambridge Cobb is the same Cobbe that appears in the Swaffham Church accounts, he would have died before the last bequest was made to the tower at Hilborough.

Few parapets in Norfolk approach the elaboration of Hilborough or Swaffham. Where the buttresses do not reach the parapet the crenellated screens that form the parapet usually meet at the corners of the tower at a right angle with no intermediary element as at Honing or Lamas. Sometimes this junction is strengthened to form a support for a pinnacle or statue as at West Tofts or Tibenham, though the general effect on the observer remains one of solidity and horizontality. However, where the buttresses are carried up to the full height of the tower or are extended in the form of pilasters at 45 degrees to the angle of the bell chamber the junction of each face of the parapet is often more complex and there is usually a greater vertical thrust imparted as a continuation of the upward energy of the buttress. The simplest way to do this was to carry the vertical element, whether buttress or pilaster, uninterrupted through the parapet stage. At Northwold the diagonal pilasters extend to the top of the parapet where they support small crocketted pinnacles (Plate 99a). Further pinnacles placed on the central merlons of each side of the parapet increasing the verticality. At Whitwell the diagonal buttresses reach the parapet where the lower sill is carried round all the elements without interruption. The buttresses continue upwards, but are stepped back in successive stages to form the pinnacles in a successfully smooth transition.[119] At Castle Acre the buttresses continue through the parapet cutting the corners at 45 degrees, but are enlarged to form heavy rectangular blocks that project above the parapet. The effect of the transition from angle buttresses to diagonal buttresses shortly below the parapet and the continuation into these corner blocks is awkward and discontinuous. Elsewhere, where there is no attempt to run the buttresses through the parapet, thereby reducing the need to cut the right angle corners of the top of the tower with diagonal elements, designers had a freer hand in managing the transition. At Salle, strong square corner turrets support four-sided crocketted pyramids in a successful continuation of the vertical thrust of the square buttresses. At Swaffham, where square buttresses intrude into the lower part of the parapet, the square corner turrets overhang the space between each pair of buttresses and support modest crocketted spirelets. At Bacton, the strong diagonal buttresses are chamfered

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[119] St Michael's Church, Whitwell, is the church of the parish of Whitwell. However, it is in the village of Reepham and shares a churchyard with two other parish churches: All Saints, Hackford, of which only a piece of ruined masonry remains, and St Mary's, Reepham.

from the lower sill of the parapet to form weak diagonal vertical shafts at the corners of the parapet screen.

The fact that there were so many different attempts to solve the problem of joining diagonal buttresses to the right angle corners of parapets indicates that those involved in designing parapets were not complacent in their choices. If a design was perceived not to have worked it was not copied or developed. In the majority of cases, 122 towers of 176, this dilemma was not encountered though, and the sides of the parapet screen meet at right angled corners as described above. Although a few towers have crenellations above very deep screens, most notably at Honingham where the panelled parapet ennobles an otherwise modest tower, the general effect in the majority of cases is of defensive solidity. The extreme verticality and almost playful treatment of the concept of battlements expressed by the tops of towers in other parts of the country, especially in Somerset and the Cotswolds, is largely absent. Where pierced parapets are common in the west of England, only two examples play with the notion of defensive crenellation in Norfolk. Together with the displacement of buttresses and the relative massiveness of tower dimensions, the rugged nature of parapets can be seen to define the characteristic profile of so many Norfolk and East Anglian towers of the later Middle Ages.

Tower Openings and their Organisation: Doors, Windows, Belfry Openings and Sound Holes

The tower of Marsham church (Fig. 25), nine miles north of Norwich, is about fifty-five feet tall with plain diagonal buttresses that rise in three stages to two-thirds of the total height and project only about three feet at the base. There is no parapet, but only a low band of knapped flint arranged in a chequer pattern to emphasise the top of the tower. The profile is typical of towers designed in the first half of the fourteenth century and, although there is no documentation to securely date it, judging by its form Marsham must be placed in this time frame.[120] When the tower is approached from the west, the viewer is confronted

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[120] A very similar tower was being built at Barsham, eight miles west of Norwich, in 1344, when 6s. 8d. was left to its construction, Cattermole, P., and Cotton, S., *Norfolk Archaeology 38,* p236.

with a large expanse of flint-rubble wall, presumably originally rendered, with almost no surface elaboration or articulation.   The blank wall is relieved by one string course below the bell chamber and by three small openings: a small, low west window with simple cusped Y-tracery; a single, tiny lancet at about thirty-five feet; and a small bell chamber opening, now devoid of tracery. There is no aesthetic connection between these three openings, either in terms of their positioning in the wall of the tower, their individual profiles, or in the employment of a framing device linking them together. The impression is that little thought was given to a unity of design and consequently, little importance is given to this aspect of the church as a visual statement. The tower was apparently not conceived with the idea of creating an impressive visual impact on approach. As the only lay entrance to the church was through the south porch and door at the south-west corner of the church, this may not be surprising.

Fig. 25. Marsham

However, surviving documentation that attests to church building campaigns in this period is rare.

While Marsham is typical of the majority of towers built throughout the fourteenth century, from the middle of the century some towers were designed with greater emphasis placed on the openings, particularly on their west sides. Great Witchingham (Plate 54), under construction in 1377, is fundamentally similar to the fourteenth-century type as outlined above, except that it has prominent angle buttresses and, most importantly for this analysis, a west door.[121] The window, soundholes and belfry openings are still small in relation to the area of blank wall, though the tracery is more elaborate and the west window is flanked by two deeply-recessed image niches with cusped heads. Although the changes from the Marsham model are slight, with the exception of the presence of the portal, they signal a difference in conception in tower design, especially where the western aspect is concerned. A west door would have given a tower a new relationship to the observer. The tower was now to be approached from the west, at least on certain occasions, and the greater emphasis placed on the aesthetic importance of the buttresses, together with the presence of images intended to be seen from the west, indicate that the tower at Great Witchingham was designed with this approach in mind. Nevertheless, there are no framing or unifying devices, other than rudimentary hoodmoulds around each of the openings, and the main architectural elements of the tower still appear disjointed, beyond the conjoining effect of three strong string courses that run around all sides of the tower and buttresses and upon which the window, sound holes and belfry openings sit.

The builders of St Giles-on-the-Hill in Norwich made good use of the site of the church, at the highest point of the medieval city as the name suggests, by constructing a dominant tower that is as visible from certain approaches as the cathedral spire. It was built in the first decades of the fifteenth century and may have been started at the end of the fourteenth.[122] Here, the frame of the great

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[121] In 1377, 3 marks were left to building the tower by Nicholas de Suthed, NCC Heydon 142. This date is consistent with the material forms of the tower as outlined above. The window tracery has been replaced, though in a style which would fit with the rest of the tower.

[122] Blomefield 1805 vol. 4, p239, notes that Robert de Dunston ordered his second wife, Margaret, to give £5 to the tower in 1424. The nave was built in the last quarter of the fourteenth century to judge both by style and the surviving will of Stephen de Holt leaving 30 s. to emendation of the nave in 1386, NCC Harsyk 78. Although the tower is not part of the same building campaign as the nave, the style of the moulding of the tower arch and the smoothness of the transition of the exterior nave wall to that of the tower suggests that the tower was commenced soon after the rebuilding of the nave.

five-light west window extends down to the base course of the tower, also framing the door and its flanking image niches (Plate 104a). The door and the window are united and emphasised by this motif so that an observer approaching from the west would understand the importance of the entrance. The door itself is framed by prominent moulded mullions and a transom that extends to frame the top of the image niches also. This frame creates a defined space around the spandrels of the door arch in which are placed quatrefoils containing shields that are now blank. So, within the main frame of the west window are further subsidiary framing devices that create defined areas that were exploited for display. The impression created is that the west face of the tower is projecting a consciously designed image, in other words, that it is a providing a façade for the church – something lacking at Marsham and, to a lesser extent, Great Witchingham. These three churches are representative of different choices made by tower designers and patrons that seem to reflect a development in the idea of what a tower could express.

From the second half of the fourteenth century, towers tended to be designed with much larger openings, particularly in their western faces. Where, hitherto, windows and belfry openings had been, for the most part, mainly functional with little elaboration and only simple mouldings and tracery patterns, by the beginning of the fifteenth century it had become the norm for designers to create windows, sound-holes, belfry openings and doors that articulate the overall design of towers very clearly and boldly. By 1400 then, towers were being constructed with their openings as significant elements in the overall design aesthetic. Not only were doors, windows and belfry openings becoming larger and more elaborate, but they were integrated into unified designs so that each element referred directly to the others; they were indeed sometimes connected to each other by articulated motifs such as string courses and overarching hood-moulds in the surface masonry of the structures. This unity of design of openings is one of the elements that characterises parish church towers of the later Middle Ages in Norfolk. This has the effect of focusing the observer's attention on these openings, particularly on the grandeur of the entrance portal where west door

and window are framed by one overarching masonry course, as at Foulsham, for example.

Another feature of later towers is the appearance of sound-holes as major decorative elements in their designs. Where earlier towers typically had small, untraceried lancets piercing tower walls above west windows and below belfry stages (if there were any openings at this level at all), large, square openings with centred tracery designs were frequently chosen as openings on the north, west and south faces from the later fourteenth century. The increasing attention paid to the design of openings appears to speak clearly of the increased importance given to towers by parochial patrons in general.

The most striking feature of the majority of the towers from the sample period, and that which distinguishes them from most earlier towers in Norfolk, is the presence of a west door. Of the 164 towers studied, 104 have west doors. Although a statistical analysis of earlier towers in Norfolk has not been carried out, it is clear from general observation that, proportionately, far fewer have portals. Of course, we can never know the forms of those towers that were replaced by later ones, though as only a few of the hundreds that remain have west doors it is reasonable to conclude that only a small proportion ever had them. It seems then that there was a significant moment in the late fourteenth century when, for some reason, it became *de rigeur* to commission a church tower with an entrance in its west face, and a significant and elaborate one at that. Not only is the fact of the existence of these doors important, but also the prominence they were given by designers. They are usually more than nine feet and frequently more than eleven feet tall. The west door at Cromer, inside a large and very ornate Galilee porch, reaches nearly fifteen feet.

A few doors, as at Barnham Broom for instance, are positioned in a blank wall and are unadorned except for the mouldings of the door-frame (Plate 6a). In these cases, the design does not have the effect of highlighting the importance of the portal. Most, though, relate to adjacent structural and decorative elements in a way that suggests that their designers conceived of them as more than simple entrances, attaching an importance to them that connects with the overall scheme of tower forms in many cases. They are usually framed by arches and jambs with carved mouldings of varying degrees of complexity and elaboration. It is not within the scope of this project to make a detailed study of all the moulding

profiles of these architectural features, yet groups and types will be considered to help shed light on the choices available to designers and patrons, and on the iconographical context in which aesthetic decisions were made.[123]

There is no general geographical pattern to the distribution of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century towers with doors in the county. However, there are noticeable clusters of towers without doors in the Breckland area in the south-west, and within a radius of ten miles of the centre of Norwich, as well as among the parish churches of Norwich itself. In the first two cases it is probable that the higher incidence of door-less towers is directly correlated to the poverty of the parishes in which they were commissioned. This question will be examined in detail Chapter 5, though it is sufficient to note at this point that Breckland and, to a lesser extent, the area immediately to the north of Norwich are poor in soil and therefore were low in agricultural productivity. Parish churches found within easy reach of Norwich, that is, within a ten-mile radius of the city, seem in general to be less ambitious and less well funded than others further out. This may also reflect the dominance of the city as a market and manufacturing centre, inhibiting these activities in the communities in its hinterland, whereas more distant parishes benefited materially from their relative economic independence.

The case of towers constructed within the city itself is more complicated, although here too, economic factors seem to have played an important part in the choice of whether to include a door.[124] However, the density of building in the city centre and the necessity of having to build churches hard up against other buildings or rights of way must have affected the choice in a number of cases. At St George Tombland and St John Maddermarket, for example, the position of the west ends of the churches adjacent to rights of way and parallel to main thoroughfares surely inhibited the attraction of having a grand western entrance as well as compromising the physical possibility of entering unhindered from that direction. This may also have been the case at St Michael at Plea, where a

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[123] Such detailed studies of moulding profiles, often together with window tracery patterns, are usually carried out with the intention of tracing the work of individual architects or master masons. See Fawcett, R., 1975, and Roberts, E., 1977. As mentioned before, attribution is not a major concern of this study. However, consideration of the mouldings around west doors will help to elucidate the aesthetic concerns of designers and patrons, and may help an understanding of the ideological programmes that informed those aesthetic choices.

[124] A full discussion of the particular factors affecting the construction of parish church towers in Norwich can be found in chapter 5.

grand porch was subsequently added to the south side of the tower. Nevertheless, the general pattern both within Norwich and the wider county is that the absence of west doors is reflected in the modesty of the whole tower and, often, of the rest of the church to which it is attached. A notable exception is the tower at Winterton-on-Sea which stands at one hundred and twenty-four feet tall and lacks a western entrance.

The chronological distribution of firmly dateable towers without doors is even across the sample period. As a proportion of those towers known to have been under construction in particular decades there is remarkably little variation. It is very apparent therefore, that once the tendency to design towers with west doors became manifest, it became immediately fashionable and remained at the same level throughout the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. There was no phased introduction of the type. As noted above, the great development in this aspect of tower design happened sometime towards the end of the fourteenth century, when not only grander towers such as Hingham or Aylsham were built with west portals, but more modest examples appear, such as South Acre or Brumstead.[125]

Almost all west doors of the period were framed with jambs and arches carved from freestone with moulding patterns of varied levels of elaboration and sophistication. The materials and workmanship involved, together with the increased structural complexity of building a door at the base of a heavy mass of masonry, were the reasons that patrons would have paid more for a tower with a door than for a tower without one. Yet the desirability of having an imposing western entrance to the church outweighed, in most cases, the extra costs involved.

The most modest of doors were framed with hoodmoulds and where there are rare exceptions without them, such as at Erpingham, the outermost

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[125] South Acre: 40 marks were left to the building of the tower in 1383. (There is another surviving bequest from the fifteenth century and a further two from the beginning of the sixteenth century. The modest tower at South Acre either took a century and a half to complete, or was subject to various collapses and repairs during this time, something that is not evident in the material of the building.) Cattermole, P. and Cotton, S., p236.
Brumstead: in 1390 a bequest was made leaving 20 s. to the tower and 6 s. to the bells, probably contributing towards the later stages of the building campaign. Cattermole, P. and Cotton, S., p 241.

order of mouldings projects outwards from the plane of the wall to perform, *de facto*, the same function.[126] Interestingly, the majority of doors have a freestone moulding course projected vertically from the lower termination of the hoodmould to a moulded string course level with the top of the hoodmould thereby framing the door-arch and creating enclosed spandrels in which decoration was usually displayed. This type of framing motif is equivalent to the Mozarabic *Alfiz*, a square frame around either the horseshoe arch of a doorway or around the whole portal, probably first designed in Andalusia in the eighth century.[127] Simple examples of this can be seen at Banningham, Bunwell and Fincham, for example (Plate 46a). In many instances, this framing device was projected more confidently and elaborately. At Felmingham, the horizontal string course that touches the top of the hoodmould continues across the west face of the tower connecting the two western buttresses and framing an area to either side of the door that encloses an area above the pedestal moulding that is used for flushwork panel decoration (Plate 43a). This is a common motif throughout late medieval towers in Norfolk, which has the effect of giving a privileged aspect to this zone of the building and increases the focus on the importance of the door, especially when the decoration is as striking as the famous flushwork at Coltishall (Plate 28a). In this latter example, there is a parallel string course about two feet above that already mentioned creating, in effect, a frieze above the door running from buttress to buttress, containing alternating flushwork panels with blank shields and crowned letter Is for St John the Baptist, to whom the church is dedicated.

There are 32 churches with similar horizontal friezes above their west doors where the designers used the device to display heraldic shields such as at Cawston or Wymondham, religious signs as at Northrepps where finely carved panels alternate IHS with the Marian monogram, a mixture of religious and

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[126] A hoodmould is a course of masonry projecting outwards from a wall that runs around the top of an arch that frames a door or window. It was designed partly to articulate the architectural feature beneath it and partly to protect that feature from the effect of water running down the wall. It usually terminates at the springing of the arch. At Erpingham and elsewhere where there is no hoodmould, the outermost order of moulding of the door that reaches to the ground projects out from the wall in much the same way. However, it is not, like a hoodmould, an element distinct from the frame of the door.

[127] For a debate on the transmission of the *Altiz* motif and its induction in Christian architecture in Asturias in the ninth century and its possible Visigothic origins, see Dodds, J. D., *Architecture and Ideology in Early Medieval Spain*, Pennsylvania and London, 1990, pp 32, 33.

secular heraldry which can be seen at Salle (Plate 122b,c) or New Buckenham, or geometrical decoration like the very similar vine scrolls that can be found in the north-east of the county at Southrepps and Ingham.

In all cases where this decorative frieze is encountered the west widow was designed to sit directly above it, creating a continuity and unity of design that emphasises the importance and grandeur of the western entrance. Approaching North Tuddenham church (Plate 97) from the west, the observer has a very different impression from that of entering Redenhall church through the west door (Plate 116a). At the former the door and west window are separated by an expanse of blank wall. There is no framing design around the door other than the mouldings of the arch and the jambs and there is no articulation of the wall beyond the door and the other openings. The main structural elements are dislocated and no sense of importance is given to the entrance. At Redenhall, the door is framed by enclosed spandrels decorated with angels holding shields cut from freestone. To either side of the door the wall is clad in freestone with two elaborately carved niches, now empty, with cusped ogee arches and crocketted spires, and lierne vaulting under the canopies. Above the door is a much-repaired freestone frieze with a variety of blank shields in irregular frames, some of which seem to have been re-cut. Directly above this is a four-light window, itself surrounded by the most elaborate flushwork panelling to be seen on any Norfolk tower.[128] Any observer can recognise the sense of importance that this western aspect creates.[129]

There is a small group of towers in the north and north-east of Norfolk that were designed with a further framing device for the western entrance beyond those which have been considered above. At Southrepps (Plate 132a), Ingham (Plate 75a) and Foulsham (Plates 47, 47a) the outermost order of moulding of the arch of the west window extends vertically down to the base course of the tower, framing the door in a great unifying arch, rather as at St Giles-on-the-Hill and at Fakenham. In each example, the plane of the wall inside this arch, either side of the door, is set back from the plane of the outer wall by up to a foot. As the west

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[128] As noted in the introduction, the tower at Redenhall shares many formal similarities with other towers in nearby north Suffolk, particularly those at Eye and Laxfield. There is sufficient difference in detail to preclude any strong conclusions about attribution, though it seems highly likely that the respective patrons were influenced by such distinctive local models.

[129] The iconographic implications of these aesthetic choices will be considered in chapter 4.

window is wider than the door, especially at Southrepps, there is an area to either side of the door that is used for decoration – freestone panels and image niches at Southrepps and flushwork panels at Ingham and Foulsham. This great framing arch unifying the west window and door at each church increases the sense of monumentality of the entrance. It may seem facile to speak of triumphal arches and it is doubtful if such an iconographic idea would have resonated with contemporary observers, yet it is undeniable that there is an echo of such an effect when approaching one of these churches from the west. On the other hand, most contemporary observers could have recognised the resemblance of these church towers to the great city and town gates, as well as collegiate and conventual precinct gates, which were distributed across Norfolk and beyond. The use of this motif and the motivation for its employment will be examined in Chapter 4 below.

The treatment of detail on each of these towers is sufficiently different to suggest strongly that their formal similarities are due to imitation rather than shared attribution. Though the tracery of the west windows at Ingham and Foulsham was executed to substantially the same design, the substitution of a quatrefoil oculus between uninterrupted super-mullions above the sub-arches at Foulsham for the pair of squat trefoil-headed arches at Ingham and, more pertinently, the different treatment of the shouldering and cusping of the ogees in both windows speak eloquently of different designers. The similarities are thus best understood as the result of stipulations by the patrons in the contracts rather than common authorship.

The moulding of jambs and arches of west doors falls into three related categories that remain more or less fixed throughout the period and across the county, with a few minor variations. There are those moulding profiles where the half shaft or bowtell, usually with a base and capital, is the dominant element, those where the hollow chamfer creates the main aesthetic effect and those where bracket or ogee mouldings, usually tightly grouped and repeated, are the main motif. In the majority of cases at least two of these designs are combined to create a moulding profile with a number of orders and a high degree of complexity. It is noticeable, however, that moulded elements rarely have raised flat projections or fillets, like those to be seen in the late fourteenth-century profiles at Bunwell or that of Cawston in the first quarter of the fifteenth, after

the beginning of the period.[130] There seems to have been a conscious rejection of this motif by most masons, in favour of designs that conveyed more fluidity, less definition and therefore a greater degree of ambiguity in patterns of light and shade.

The most common general type is that which uses repeated bracket mouldings, in other words a series of shallow, concave ogee curves. These are frequently found on doors which can be classified as modest in size and situated in towers with little elaboration. The transition from the vertical jamb moulding to the curved arch moulding is usually unbroken, as seen in the examples of Shropham and Pulham St Mary (Plate 114a). In an otherwise unelaborated west front, such as that at Grimston, or in a grander example at Blakeney, the close repetition of these mouldings creates an effect of insubstantiality in the tight patterns of light and shade.

This type was rarely used for grander entrances, although ogee mouldings often form a part of the moulding profiles of such portals. Commonly, half shafts were used in the vertical mouldings to delineate the different orders. They usually terminate in capitals at the springing point of the arch, rather than being carried upwards. The arch mouldings in such cases are usually either a combination of plain and hollow chamfer, or a further semi-circular or ogee profiled element that continues to the apex, as at Cawston (Plate 27b) or Fincham.

The least common of the principal moulding motifs is the hollow chamfer. Chamfers, both plain and hollow, were often used to separate other moulding elements, but broad, hollow chamfers – shallow concave curves, often asymmetrical so that one of the lips of the curve terminates more sharply and throws a more definite shadow than the other – were not used as the main motif as often as the other forms considered above. They tend to be found more often surrounding doors in grander west fronts than otherwise, particularly as they present an opportunity for a display of decoration. At Deopham (Plate 32a) a hollow chamfer is filled with carved rosettes, while at Happisburgh there are blank shields suspended from pegs, at North Elmham fleurons, and at Pulham

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[130] There are a number of doors of later towers where fillets where employed in the design of the mouldings, as at St Martin at Fincham, built in the second half of the fifteenth century, though these are relatively uncommon when set against other types.

Market a double order of crowns and fleurons and mythical beast-heads. In other instances, as at Alburgh, Carbrooke or Heydon, they were left empty allowing deep shadows to be cast inside the door frame.

In all cases, complicated moulding profiles, particularly in external positions, create an effect of insubstantiality in the observer. The fluidity of some designs and the tight repetition of narrow bands of light and shade in others blur the assurance of solid lines – it is often difficult to grasp how the door frame quite relates to the entrance that it surrounds. It is important to note in the light of this observation, that very often, particularly in frames where repeated ogee mouldings are dominant, that mouldings were carved to disappear gradually into a plain diagonal chamfer at lower levels. There are numerous instances of this motif, for instance at Blakeney and Grimston, where the ogee mouldings spring from the solid, plain chamfer close to the ground, or Griston, Hackford and Northrepps (Plate 98c) where the carved mouldings integrate with the flat surface of the chamfer around the point of the springing of the arch. At Fincham, the bases of the half shafts merge imperceptibly with the flat stone, but most remarkable of all examples of this motif is that found at Tunstead, where the vertical moulding of the door frame is dominated by two massive, almost classical, engaged columns that give way at the springing point of the arch to a series of fine, complicated mouldings (Plate 144a). There is no better example in Norfolk of the tendency to design mouldings around doors that emphasise the weight and solidity of the lower elements of the door frame, while accentuating the insubstantiality and indeterminability of the upper elements. While these designs create a pleasing aesthetic effect characterised by the contrast of solidity and lightness, the fact that designers continued to choose them throughout the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, often creating the effect with otherwise very different moulding profiles, suggests that there was a programmatic concern beyond that of pure aesthetics. It has been observed that doors were usually integrated into the overall design of a tower, relating closely to other structural and decorative elements. Whether the treatment of mouldings frequently displayed around the west doors of the towers in the sample group relates to these more general schemes will be considered in the context of an investigation of architectural iconography in Chapter 4.

West windows assumed a far greater importance in tower design from the end of the fourteenth century. Even the grand parish towers of the fourteenth century placed little emphasis on windows and their place in a unified design. Great Witchingham has a modest two light window that does not relate to any other architectural elements in the tower; the same can be said of Walpole St Peter (Plate 147) and Tottington, and even Hingham, a very large tower indeed, has a comparatively small three light window with admittedly very fine tracery, marooned in a wall of flint.

There is a tendency for windows in later towers not only to form part of a unified whole, but to exploit the greater space available. As a result there are only ten two-light windows in the entire sample, when they had been the most common type only a couple of decades earlier in the third quarter of the fourteenth century. The majority, 94, have three lights and the rest, 72, four lights or more. In general, windows built earlier in the period tend to use less of the width available than those designed later. Very ambitious towers such as Salle (Plate 122a) and Cawston (Plate 27a) from the first quarter of the fifteenth century can be seen to have relatively narrow windows when compared to other large towers from later periods, such as Ingham (Plate 75a), Happisburgh and, most noticeably, Southrepps (Plate 132a), with its enormous six-light window that fills the whole width of the west face of the tower between the buttresses.[131] There are exceptions to this tendency: St Giles-on-the-Hill and St Peter Mancroft, both in Norwich, have towers probably started in the last decade of the fourteenth century which have large five-light windows that extend a great part of the width of their facades, especially so in the former case. These are exceptional however, the norm being better represented by Swanton Morley, a tower analogous with St Giles in respect of its dominant upper stage, which has a comparatively modest west window of three lights, surrounded by a large expanse of blank masonry.

It is apparent that there is a geographical pattern in the choice of prominence given to west windows. Broadly speaking, in the north and east of

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[131] It must be noted here that much window tracery, such as that at Southrepps, has been replaced, either in whole or in part. Judging from the antiquity of the hoodmoulds around the windows, I have not found an example where an entire new window has been inserted. Such a subsequent replacement would, in any case, have presented a very serious structural challenge that seems not to have been attempted. Most replacement window tracery seems to replicate the original design, except in those few cases where simple Y-tracery has been introduced.

Norfolk there was a tendency to an increase in size and importance in the overall design as the fifteenth century progressed. It seems that a local tradition was established that favoured such dominant windows as Ingham, Happisburgh and Southrepps, all located within a few miles of each other in the north-east of the county. As noted above in the discussion about unity of design, it seems that those involved in the design process must have adopted local models to imitate or improve upon and thus developed a strong local tradition. Other notable examples of grand windows in the north and east are Blakeney, Brisley, Blofield, Cromer and Foulsham. There are, of course, grand towers in this region with more modest fenestration: Winterton, one of the tallest towers, has a small three-light window and no west door, for example. Furthermore, there are cases of towers with grand west windows in the south and west of the county, the two most obvious being Fakenham (Plate 41a) and Swaffham, the former with six lights and the latter with five. It is arguable, however, that Fakenham is part of the north Norfolk tradition whereas Swaffham is a tower, like St Peter Mancroft, Salle and Cawston, that transcends local taxonomical classification in many respects.

The tendency in the west and, particularly, the south of the county was to eschew elaboration in window design in favour of more superficial design elements. Redenhall, a very impressive tower from later in the period, has a four-light window that is overwhelmed by the panels of flint flushwork that surround it. At New Buckenham, a modest window of three lights is placed above a very imposing entrance and set in a very effective flint and freestone chequer pattern; a profusion of geometrical flushwork designs on the plinth course and climbing the buttresses add to the elaboration. At Garboldisham (Plate 49a), a few miles from New Buckenham the importance of the tower is similarly expressed by the use of knapped flints in chequer and flushwork designs, while the west window is again of three lights with a very simple intersecting Y-tracery pattern. It is probable that a long tradition of flint knapping, together with local sources of the finest flint for decorative work was highly influential in the choice of elaborating and decorating towers in this way in the south and west of the county, as well as in north Suffolk. In the north of the county, where the tradition of emphasising and articulating the major architectural elements of towers was given more importance, there was less access to the type and quality of flint necessary for

decorative flushwork, and therefore a subsequent scarcity of craftsmen experienced in the skill.[132]

The openings in church towers were opportunities for displays of technical ability and virtuosity, as well as innovation, on the parts of designers and masons. The doors, windows, sound holes and belfry openings were, in most cases, created with freestone that was cut in intricate patterns that required a high degree of skill to execute. However, after the early decades of the fifteenth century, the parameters within which masons worked when creating tracery patterns were quite narrow. The tracery of west windows and bell-chamber openings expresses little of the freedom of invention seen in the equivalent designs of the end of the fourteenth century.

At Worstead, a tower that in its emphasis on the west door and window, which are unified by a framing arch, seems to prefigure the towers of the fifteenth century, the four-light window contains curvilinear tracery of great fluidity and invention (Plate 161a). It is sub-arcuated, each of the two-centred minor arches containing further ogee sub-arches. From the point of each ogee two curved dagger motifs, rather like leaves, spread laterally and a further dagger rises vertically like a candle flame to the top of each main sub-arch. The area between the sub-arches is filled with four daggers intersecting in a saltire motif. All the tracery is prominently cusped. There are strong echoes of the tracery in the west walk of Norwich cathedral cloisters in this design, yet also the presence of the vertical dagger tracery springing from the point of an ogee arch that would be common in west windows at the end of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth centuries. It is not possible to date the tower precisely, though the tracery of the west window, when taken together with the moulding of the framing arch, and the design of the bell chamber openings that have super-mullions, suggest that the tower was under construction in the last third of the fourteenth century.

At St Giles-on-the-Hill in Norwich the "candle flame" motif is used again in the tracery of the west window (Plate 104a). There are five lights with two intersecting sub-arches and the lancet shape created by this intersection is

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[132] See Pevsner and Wilson, 1999, pp 19-24, for a discussion of the distribution and manipulation of flint in Norfolk. This theme will be explored further in Chapter 4.

mirrored in minor sub-arches that head the outside lights. Within each of these minor arches the "candle flame" design springs from an ogee as at Worstead. One effect of having intersecting sub-arcuation with discrete secondary sub-arches is to have four prominent curved tracery members meeting the main window arch at an angle as if they were buttressing the main arch of the window. This draws attention to the massiveness of the masonry above this very large opening in the wall and emphasises the importance of the window in supporting the tower above and around it. In contrast to these curvilinear elements at St Giles, there are motifs that are conventionally classified as Perpendicular. Four of the mullions of the main lights of the window continue upwards through the design to meet the main arch at the vertical. The second and fourth lights are divided above their heading arches by super-mullions into two panels of angular batement lights. The squareness of these designs contrasts noticeably with the curvilinear motifs and the whole is strongly reminiscent of the tracery design on the north side of the choir of the Dominican Friary in Norwich, now known as Blackfriars Hall. The tracery of the blank intermediary stage openings at St Giles, where there would conventionally have been sound holes, contains elements of that of the west window, while that of the belfry openings, although sub-arcuated, is much less curvilinear and more conventionally Perpendicular and, therefore, suggest that the tastes of the designers and patrons changed over the time it took to complete the tower.[133]

In general, though, most tracery patterns in the openings of Norfolk towers were designed within fairly narrow, conventional parameters. The dominant motif is that of a tracery light bounded by mullions rising to a head, often an ogee, that is then subdivided by a super-mullion springing from the point of the head. The subdivided sections, or batement lights, in the head of the window arch or bell-chamber opening, when aggregated in the three or four light designs common in Norfolk towers, form a horizontal element that breaks the verticality of the tracery pattern. They are found in the majority of Norfolk towers, ranging from the modest, as at Westwick (Plate 151a), to the ambitious, as seen in the west window at Swaffham (Plate 137c). Batement lights were

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[133] T.A.Heslop has pointed out the similarities between this tracery design and those in the north nave windows of the Dominican Priory in Norwich and of Swaffham church in "Swaffham Church: Community Building in Fifteenth Century Norfolk" in *Medieval East Anglia*, Harper-Bill, C., (ed.), Woodbridge, 2005.

often used as elements in more complicated designs and are rarely absent, in some form, in the west windows or bell-chamber openings of Norfolk towers. At Foulsham (Plate 47b) and Blofield, a double course of these subdivided lights creates a perforated transom at the intersection of the two layers.

Crenellated transoms are common features of west window tracery though not of the other openings. They are generally positioned between a third and half way up the height of a window, dividing it into an upper and lower section, as at Fakenham and Blakeney. Apart from breaking the upward thrust of the main mullions, these transoms reinforce the idea of the architectural solidity of the window design, much as sub-arches do. They also mirror the crenellations of the parapet above and resonate with the idea of the tower as a notional towered gateway.[134]

Perhaps the most vigorous elements in tracery design seen in tower openings in the sample are the cusping of arches and the related motif of the 'shouldered' ogee. Nearly every tower has tracery that includes cusped arches. It is usually present in both the west window and in the bell-chamber openings, lacking only in openings where the tracery has been lost or subsequently replaced in the twentieth century. The degree of cusping varies so that at Alburgh, the shallow cusps do not greatly affect the interior curves of the arches at the heads of the tracery lights.[135] At Cawston, on the other hand, the cusps are so prominent that they nearly meet across the head of the arch. Occasionally, as at Fincham, sub-cusps are carved within the main cusps so that the density of carving at the head of each light almost obscures the line of the ogee arch (Plate 46b). At Fincham, the cusps create a confusion of light and shade around the major tracery elements and recall a thicket of thorns.

The exceptions to the general rule that almost all window tracery of the period is cusped are found in openings where 'shouldered' ogees are carved. This design is, in effect, a six-centred arch, where a normal ogee is four-centred. To create the design, a normal ogee is traced, but where the downward curve of the bottom of the arch reaches towards the vertical a new curve, with its centre inside the arch, is drawn. This creates a shoulder that interrupts the flow of the

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[134] For the iconological implications of the references to tower d gateways, see Chapter 4 below.
[135] Much of the tracery at Alburgh was probably replaced in the 19th century. While it was usual for Victorian craftsmen to replicate the original designs, the workmanship was often dissimilar so that individual details such as the size of the cusps may be obscured

arch and at the inside of the curve creates an effect similar to a cusp. 'Shouldered' ogees can be seen in tracery in parish towers in Norfolk that can be dated to the second quarter of the fifteenth century and later. They appear to be one of the few innovations in tracery design of the fifteenth century in the sample group. It is instructive to notice that they were carved in both the bell-chamber openings at St Giles in Norwich and at Swanton Morley, where the west windows, completed at the end of the fourteenth or beginning of the fifteenth century in both cases, have conventional cusps. At some time between the completion of the lower stages of these towers and the construction of the upper parts 'shouldered' ogees became an available choice for tower designers. They quickly became fashionable, for they were employed by the masons of some of the more ambitious towers with impressive west windows built in the middle of the century. They can be seen in the west windows at Ingham, Foulsham (Plate 47b), Brisley and Blofield (Plate 14a), towers that share many formal similarities as highlighted above. The earliest extant examples are to be found in the north aisle windows of the Blackfriars' in Norwich, rebuilt in the 1420s after a fire. The chronology of their appearance in towers across the county would suggest that this was the model that was followed.[136]

Towers built at the west ends of parish churches in Norfolk in the late Middle Ages fall broadly into two formal groups. Those whose builders eschewed innovation, for whatever reason, and continued to construct towers that recall those of the late thirteenth or early fourteenth centuries, so that a tower built at the end of the period, such as that at Santon Downham (Fig. 26) on the Suffolk border can, in many aspects, resemble one built two hundred years earlier.[137] This persistence of traditional forms calls into question those who would tie taxonomic classification to chronology.

[136] See Heslop, 2005, pp.253-4 for a discussion of the Blackfriars' north aisle tracery and its influence at Swaffham.
[137] Santon Downham can be dated to inscriptions on its base course to the 1520s.

Fig. 26. Santon Downham

Then there are those whose designers and patrons chose to adopt
innovative forms, first seen in Norfolk in the middle of the fourteenth century at
such towers as Hingham and Aylsham, producing more articulated buildings that
often focus the attention on the new western entrance of the church with a
hitherto unknown integration of the main architectural features. This group, in its
general forms, is broadly homogenous. Yet within the homogeneity of the
general form, Norfolk towers exhibit a great variety of individual features. No
two towers are identical, though some are very similar. Bressingham (Plate 18)
and Pulham Market towers (Plates 113, 113a) are so alike in almost every detail

that Fawcett, on close examination of moulding profiles and tracery design, attributed them to the same master mason.[138] However, this degree of similarity is rare. More often designers and patrons chose architectural and decorative features from a range of models when arriving at a design. Sometimes a dominant feature is repeated in a number of churches that exhibit similar levels of ambition, as in the cognate group of towers that includes Brisley, Blofield, Ingham and Fakenham already discussed in this chapter. The framing arch around the west window and door of these churches is a bold and ambitious feature that seems to have excited the admiration of those patrons that were searching for design ideas. In none of these instances is there sufficient evidence to conclude that the same craftsmen were engaged on more than one tower. This evidence suggests that the patrons played important roles in the design process and sheds light on the interplay between the patron-designer and the mason, a process that is often lost to view when only very similar forms are compared and shared attribution is sought.

The picture that emerges from an overview of the material forms of the towers is that for one hundred and fifty years from the last quarter of the fourteenth century the design and construction of these buildings was in the hands of groups of sophisticated and culturally aware people who were able to select individual component elements from admired models and synthesise them in a coherent and aesthetically sensitive manner. The precise roles of those who were paying and those who were paid in this process are not clear, though the importance of the patrons must be acknowledged if the contributions of the masons are to be understood.

The comparative analysis reveals that certain models remained available to patrons and architects throughout later Middle Ages in Norfolk and that the persistence of these types is eloquent of an attachment to a recently created tradition. What also emerges from this analysis is that style categories such as Decorated and Perpendicular are remarkably unhelpful either for dating Norfolk towers or for characterising them. Curvilinear and rectilinear tracery, for example, coexisted more or less throughout the study period, as did variable moulding profiles and buttress types. Although some tendencies become more

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[138] Fawcett, 1975, pp.254-267.

marked over time, such as the desire to link elements in the western elevations of towers, they never entirely supplant older design ideas. If there was a shared sense of a modern style, which may seriously be doubted, it was often eschewed, for financial if not for aesthetic reasons.

Chapter 4.

Iconography

There has been much debate on how far and to what ends the iconography of medieval architecture can be analysed.[139] It is clear from the writings of Isidore of Seville, through Abbot Suger of St Denis, to Durandus of Mende that medieval writers tended to consider buildings and their ornamentation in symbolic rather than formal terms. In the *Rationale Officiorum Divinorum*, Durandus is explicit in his symbolic interpretation of towers:

> The towers are the preachers and the prelates of the church, which are her bulwark and defence. Whence the bridegroom in the Canticles saith to the bride, thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armoury. The pinnacles of the towers signify the life or the mind of a prelate which aspireth heavenwards.[140]

However, as Paul Crossley pointed out in his essay "Medieval Architecture and Meaning: the Limits of Iconography" this type of analogical approach to interpretation reveals more about the *post-festum* preoccupations of the interpreter than the motivation and the cultural milieu of the designers and observers of medieval buildings.[141] Interesting though these may be, and the repeated insistence on such modes of interpretation right across the Middle Ages is revealing of medieval ways of seeing in itself, they do not get us much closer to the people who were concerned with the making and experiencing of these particular towers, which is one of the principal goals of this research.

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[139] The most complete summary in English of the re-emergence of architectural iconography as a subject for serious study in the 1940s and 1950s in German academia, is Paul Crossley "Medieval Architecture and Meaning: the Limits of Iconography" in *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol.130, No. 1019, Special Issue on English Gothic Art (Feb. 1988), pp 116-121.

[140] Neale, J.M., and Webb, B., *The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments: a Translation of the First Book of The Rationale Divinorum Officiorum Written by William Durandus*, London and Cambridge, 1843, p 27. This passage was pointed out to me by Claire Daunton.

[141] Crossley, 1988, p 116.

Richard Krautheimer in his essay 'Introduction to an "Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture"' proposed that by examining repeated architectural copies built in the Middle Ages, one could reveal some of the elements in the design of a building that were of most concern to medieval people.[142] That is, by choosing to imitate certain forms in a building again and again, designers were emphasising those parts that represented an idea that was significant to them. He showed how the copies were often far from exact but were similar enough to denote the essential idea of the venerated original. He illustrated this by examining the many churches which were built to imitate the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. These were usually not close copies in the formal sense, but notional copies, possessing some of the essential elements that characterise the Anastasis Rotonda, imprecisely translated. He summed up this notion of imitation, surprising to modern scientific sensibilities, thus:

> This inexactness in reproducing the particular shape of a definite architectural form, in plan as well as in elevation, seems to be one of the outstanding elements in the relation of copy and original in mediaeval architecture. Indeed it recalls a well-known phenomenon, the peculiar lack of precision in mediaeval descriptions not only of architectural patterns but of all geometrical forms….This particular attitude suggests a quite different approach as compared with that of the modern mind to the whole question of copying. Indeed the lack of geometrical precision is as characteristic as the "indifference" towards precise imitation of architectural shapes and patterns. In lieu of this, other intentions seem to be at the basis of copying architecture in the Middle Ages. It would seem as though a given shape were imitated not so much for its own sake as for something else it implied.[143]

However, Krautheimer ignored another type of imitation that is much closer to the modern concept of the practice. Formal descriptive analysis carried out both before and after he propounded his idea, such as the analysis of mouldings

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[142] Krautheimer, R., 'Introduction to an "Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture"' in *The Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 5 (1942), pp 1-33.
[143] Krautheimer (1942), pp 7,8.

carried out by Eileen Roberts and Richard Fawcett, has shown that very close copying could be a feature of medieval construction.[144] None the less, in introducing the idea of the notional copying of architectural prototypes he placed the working of architectural symbolism in the hands of the designers and the wishes of the patrons, and by implication in the cultural milieu in which they existed, rather than in the *post festum* interpretation of later writers and sages.

A problem with this approach is that it can elevate one particular motive to the exclusion of all others. It is reasonable to suppose, however, that a patron or group of patrons may have held a number of overlapping reasons for choosing certain types and forms and that those intentions were modified in the interaction with the people they commissioned to design and construct their building. It is surely erroneous to ignore formal or aesthetic considerations in such an analysis of motivation for the purely iconographic or symbolic. Such factors as the craftsmen's range of competence and technical capabilities, together with the pull of fashion will have weighed on the collaborative design process. Nevertheless, to follow Krautheimer's deductive lead, by analysing data taken from the material evidence and examining certain types or genres, one should be able to identify the architectural messages and thus shed light on the cultural choices made by those who commissioned and designed the buildings belonging to the sample group.

It is my contention that an examination of the constituent architectural elements of the towers that make up the sample group, together with the iconography of the motifs that decorate the buildings, set in the context of prevailing contemporary ideologies, cultural strategies and liturgies, can reveal much about the motivation of the men and women who paid for and built the towers. In particular I argue that the towers built at the western ends of Norfolk churches in the fifteenth century would have resonated with the notion of representing a grand gateway into both a heavenly as well as an earthly Jerusalem, especially when considered in the context of the increasingly popular and elaborate liturgical processions that were performed in the later Middle Ages. This resonance would have been effected by the employment and imitation of various cultural strategies that were known to the sensitive contemporary

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[144] See Fawcett, 1975, and Roberts, 1977.

observer, such as references to royal entry ceremonies and to works of late medieval literature, such as the Middle-English poem, *Pearl*. In this way, the formal analysis of the material as carried out in the previous chapter can be animated with the cultural and ideological concerns of the people who created, used and lived with the towers.

The tower of Fakenham church (Plates 41, 41a) can be seen by the visitor approaching from the south three or four miles before the rest of the church, or indeed the rest of the town.[145] It is an impressive 34 metres tall, with angle buttresses, very clearly articulated by bold string courses that divide the tower into four stages. The parapet is low and consists only of crenellations with rather squat crocketted pyramid pinnacles at each corner. The general effect is not one of vertical aspiration, but rather of solidity and strength that suggest contemporary military or city defence architecture. Even today, the tower is the most visible sign of the town. On approaching, the ensemble of architectural elements on the facade of the tower is emphasised.

The great six-light west window is visible over the rooftops of buildings that closely surround the church, filling most of the width of the façade between the buttresses, providing a great expanse of glass and tracery with two bold sub-arches. The window also has a transom with low crenellations like those of the parapet. The framing arch of the window extends to the ground encapsulating a very elaborate display of decoration around the large west door.[146] The door itself is set deep into the wall of the tower and framed by three orders of bracket mouldings divided by two fillets that spring from the capitals of half-shafts or bowtells (Plate 41b). The depth of the mouldings emphasises the thickness of the wall and allows a play of light and shadow around the door. The door and mouldings are framed by vertical masonry elements that start from the base

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[145] The tower was the result of a characteristically long building campaign. In 1447 26s.8d. was left to the new tower by Agnes Hayward, NCC Wylby 138; 1449 2 marks to the new tower, William Curteys, NCC Aleyn 36; 1465 20s. to making the tower, William Rawlyns, NCC Betyns 21; 1492 20s. to making 3 bells, Robert Bateman, NCC Wolman 150; and 1511 50s. to "the batelyng….to be doon on the steple", William Harydaunce, NFK Sparhawk 126, in Cattermole and Cotton, p 246.
[146] Unfortunately the original door does not survive in situ.

course of the tower. A horizontal string course touching the apex of the door arch completes the frame. This device creates spandrels which are richly decorated with two cusped daggers in each, one horizontal and the other vertical, about large cusped roundels containing shields, that to the north of the door displaying the arms of the passion and that to the south the royal arms of England. In this case the instruments of the passion displayed are the cross, the crown of thorns, the spear, the sponge, the reed sceptre and the sword used by St Peter to cut off the ear of the High Priest's Servant (Luke 23:50).

Within the wider frame provided by the extended window arch are two large image niches flanking the door frame and a frieze of heraldry directly above the door and below the window, uniting the two main elements of the façade. The niches, as is almost always the case, are now empty, but their grandeur and elaboration are still evident. They are tall enough to have contained near life size standing figures, probably of the two patron saints. They would have stood on pedestals and would have been protected from above by projecting ogee heads with pendent finials. The niches are vaulted with lierne ribs, creating an interior architectural space for the images to inhabit. The tabernacles are topped with pierced polygonal parapets, in effect rather like crowns, which are in turn flanked by tiny image niches that imitate the main motifs. The heraldic frieze that runs above the door to the edge of the main framework contains repeated crowned letter Ps for Peter and Paul with the arms of the two saints, crossed keys and swords respectively, at either end of this display.

Two courses of decoration run around the base of the tower. The lower course has narrow repeated panels of flint flushwork arranged to depict ogee niches with crockets and spires. The upper course is separated from the lower by a chamfered drip-mould and contains repeated square freestone panels in which there are blank shields in low relief. These two courses reach about one and a half metres high and run uninterrupted around all three sides of the tower and around the buttresses.

The tower is imposing, both in terms of scale and dominance of its surroundings, as well as in the vocabulary of visual motifs that it expresses. On the whole, towers built a century earlier in the middle of the fourteenth century did not employ as great a range of visual cues as are evident in the design of the Fakenham tower facade. The tower of Guist church (Fig. 27), six miles south-

east of Fakenham, has neither door nor parapet, no surface decoration or articulation, its profile is not modified by buttresses, and its west window and bell chamber openings, each of two lights and with simple Y tracery, do not express anything beyond their main function of lighting the ringing chamber or of allowing the sound of the bells to be heard.[147] It stands about 21 metres tall and has little relationship to the rest of the church, either externally or internally. It is a tower for housing bells and projecting their sound, and its detailing expresses very little beyond this.

Fig. 27. Guist

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[147] There is no extant documentation that allows an accurate dating of the tower, though its form and total absence of elaboration or articulation suggest that it was built no later than the third quarter of the fourteenth century.

It is important to consider, when contemplating the heterogeneity of two such structures, the difference in the effects they would have made on contemporary observers, as well as the motivation of those who had them built. Clearly the Fakenham tower is more elaborate and ambitious than that at Guist, but to what end? The simple answer of course is to state that it represents the wishes of its patrons and designers. Presumably they intended it to look the way it did, though even this idea is complicated by the possibility of changes of mind occurring over the decades it took to complete a tower, and the subsequent modifications to any original plan.

We can never know the intentions of those whose decisions and choices influenced the shaping of the late medieval towers that are the subject of this research, but an examination of the iconography of their designs can help to shed light on the ideologies that are implied by their forms. It is unlikely that there would ever have been one single reason that determined the choice of the many different material and decorative elements that go together to make up a tower, rather they are the result of many different strands of motivation that in each individual case must have weighed to a greater or lesser extent on their designers. It is my intention in this chapter to disentangle some of those strands and to identify some of the cultural and ideological forces that animated the aesthetic choices made by tower patrons and designers. As the sample under examination is large, a heuristic approach to the analysis of the iconography of late medieval Norfolk towers is valid. Where visual devices and motifs are repeatedly used across the sample, patterns of popularity can be discerned. The question is then to try and understand what significance these motifs would have had to designers and observers, beyond the strictly formal. In other words, how they were employed as emblems or hieroglyphs. Clearly signs cannot be divorced from the cultural and ideological milieu in which they are used, so a consideration of that context and how it changed is indispensable to an understanding of the way in which they were conceived and perceived in the late Middle Ages in Norfolk.

Parish church towers built in Norfolk in the late Middle Ages were not only facades, but, usually, were also entrances. This is emphasised both by the attention given to the often elaborate decoration and imagery that surrounds their doors as well as the larger architectural frame that entire towers provide for these

doors. In examining this iconography a distinction has to be made between the different types of motif that were displayed. The form of a tower as constituted by the aggregation of its architectural elements is a composition that conveys a variety of sensations and impressions. It may be that this form is suggestive or connotative of something in the mind of the observer and it may also be that its designer wished to create such an effect. There will also be images and motifs in the fabric or on the surface of the tower that do not contribute to the general architectural form of the tower, but that may denote an idea or concept to the observer or that may suggest such a concept. A shield displaying two crossed keys, commonly found around west doors and on the parapets of towers, as at Fakenham, is a sign that was conventionally understood to signify St Peter, for instance. There was also statuary, largely disappeared, that to judge from the surviving examples represented figures such as saints and angels. Even though these motifs and images are received in different ways – the impression made by the overall form of a tower creates a different sensation from the contemplation of accessible and "readable" signs and images displayed on the fabric - they may be complementary. The concept suggested by the architectural iconography of a tower may be reinforced by a range of other motifs displayed on the building.

There are very few west doors in Norfolk towers of the sample period that do not have either an elaborate architectural frame or some surrounding signs, symbols or images, or, commonly, both. Of the 104 west doors in the sample, 76 have square frames or labels similar to that at Fakenham that allow for decoration in the spandrels created between the frame and the door arch. Most commonly these spandrels are decorated with low relief traceried daggers and cusped quatrefoils, as at Happisburgh and Northrepps (Plate 98c). The quatrefoils usually contain shields that are sometimes emblazoned with heraldry or religious iconography. At Blofield there are shields with the cross keys of St Peter and the saltire of St Andrew, the patron saints, and at Southrepps there are the royal arms of England and the arms of the Passion, in a characteristic juxtaposition of religious and political themes (Plates 132b,c). Less frequently the spandrels contain figures carved in low relief, sometimes arranged in attitudes of combat as at Cawston (Plate 27b), Hilborough and Saham Toney, where the patron, Saint George, inhabits the north spandrel and the dragon the southern one (Plate 120a). At Redenhall, winged angels bear shields that are now

blank and at St Lawrence in Norwich there is a scene of martyrdom in each spandrel, to the north the patron martyred on the grill, and to the south, Saint Edmund, the patron saint of East Anglia.

Tower plinths are often decorated, usually with motifs framed by two courses of mouldings. Most commonly this decoration takes the form of flushwork tracery panels with trefoil heads, for example at Blofield and Ingham (Plate 75a). At Blakeney, similar motifs are rendered in proudwork – a variant of flushwork in which the cut masonry elements are raised in relief from the knapped flint infill. This panel decoration is often mixed or alternated with heraldic motifs. At Blakeney the north-west buttress has a shield on its face at the base course, with three mitres indicating the diocese of Norwich (Plate 13a). The south-west has a shield with a cross above a dolphin in a border of scallop shells. At Walcott the north-west buttress has a shield with emblems of the passion – the cross and the crown of thorns - while the south-west has a heraldic emblem, which, although badly weathered appears to be an engrailed saltire.

In the south and south-west of the county in particular, plinths and buttresses are frequently decorated with flushwork or low relief panels with geometrical designs. At New Buckenham, some of these imitate window tracery, others feature small blank shields, while others are carved into complicated mouchette and wheel patterns (Plate 91b). At Garboldisham, the flushwork panels on the south side of the tower plinth have similar geometrical designs to those at New Buckenham, while those on the north side, facing the manor house, display complicated religious monograms.[148] Like a number of towers in the south and the south-west such as Fincham and Northwold, Garboldisham also has flint flushwork display up the faces of its buttresses and on its parapet (Plate 49a).

There are 36 towers with image niches on their west faces. Such niches are usually found on those towers that can be characterised as grander or more elaborate. Typically, a pair of them flanks the west door as at Fakenham (Plate 41b), but sometimes they are to be found either side of the window. At Alburgh, two plain, squat niches are placed either side of the lower part of the window

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[148] For a full treatment of the iconography of flint flushwork, particularly in the south and south-west of Norfolk, see Blatchly, J. and Northeast, P., *Decoding Flint Flushwork on Suffolk and Norfolk Churches*, Ipswich, 2005.

arch, while at Swaffham the niches are incorporated into the broad chamfer of the window arch itself (Plate 137c). Swaffham has further pairs of niches, one conventionally placed either side of the door above the base course, and immediately below this, interjecting rather incongruously across the moulding of the plinth of the tower are a pair of holy water stoups.[149] The position of these is unique in the sample group – where stoups are still to be found they are almost always in a lateral porch or just inside one of the entrances – and probably indicates that , at Swaffham, the west door was also a quotidian as well as processional entrance. At Barton Turf, a single deep niche is unusually positioned above the window (Plate 8).

Occasionally, image niches are found on the faces of buttresses. At Bacton, niches with cusped arches and pedestals were built in the first stage of the western buttresses in prominent positions about three feet above the ground (Plate 3). At Brisley, all four angle buttresses have niches in the faces of their third stages, at an unusually high point (Plate 19). There are very tall pedestals, cusped heads similar to Bacton and very tall crocketted spires above. If images were ever placed in these niches, it is possible that they were representations of the four evangelists given the frequency with which they appear at the four corners of parapets, where similarly they would have been visible from all points and from a great distance. At Pulham St Mary, on the other hand, only the south-west buttress contains a niche, just above the first set-off, and there are none on the façade. As this niche faces the village and the direction of approach, it may be supposed that the designers thought it appropriate to place an image of Mary in the position it would be seen to best advantage as the parishioners walked from the village to the south porch. At St Peter Mancroft in Norwich (Plate 110), much the most articulated of all Norfolk towers, there are four pairs of image pedestals with canopies over (they cannot be properly described as niches) on the four faces of the western pair of angle buttresses, one fewer on the north and

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[149] These stoups pose a problem for those trying to understand the chronology of the building campaigns at Swaffham. They appear to be a later insertion, judging from the discontinuity with the moulding of the base course, the disruption to the surrounding masonry and the slightly different geology of the surrounding stone. For a further discussion of this question see the case study on Swaffham tower in chapter 6.

south faces of the eastern buttresses, to accommodate the intrusion of the aisle roofs, and two pairs of pedestals and canopies facing east above the nave roof.[150]

The zone between the door and the west window was frequently used for display, often incorporating a frieze of low relief or flushwork designs. As well as emphasising the importance of the door such friezes served to unify the main elements of the west face of the tower. At Blakeney a chequer flushwork strip was placed immediately above the door and below the window (Plate 13a), while at Southrepps blank shields alternate with scallop shells. Commonly, a frieze with heraldic shields was placed here, as at New Buckenham where the Knevet family, the major tower benefactors, are commemorated alongside a shield with the royal arms of England (Plate 91a).[151] Occasionally the west window is placed directly over the door with no space for decoration, as at Saham Toney and Pulham St Mary.

The parapet was another part of the tower that was used as an opportunity for the expression of religious or heraldic display in the fifteenth century. Blank shields are often found in conjunction with monograms or emblems representing the patron saint or saints of the church below, as at St John de Sepulchre in Norwich and at Northrepps, where the Marian monogram of the patron is displayed alongside other emblems, such as a heraldic cross, possibly of St George, the IHS monogram, and an image of a ship and a pair of crossed oars, together with a DR monogram that may refer to an unknown benefactor (Plate 98a).

It is apparent from an analysis of the material evidence that one of the key factors that distinguishes towers of the fifteenth century in Norfolk from those built earlier is the use to which their surfaces were put to express the ideologies of their patrons, designers and those who frequented them. Earlier parish church towers are, in the main, sparsely decorated, whereas designers of later towers utilised the architectural zones mentioned above, particularly around the door

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[150] St Peter Mancroft is atypical in its elaboration and use of materials and is discussed further in the following chapter in the context of the expression of community values.

[151] Blomefield, vol 1, pp 397, 398: "The south isle, porch and tower were begun soon after [1479] by that Sir John Knevet who married Clifton's heiress, and finished by his grandson, Sir William Knevet, as the arms in the windows and on the tower plainly demonstrate." It is interesting that the porch and the tower were both part of the same commission, inasmuch as the same patron was concerned to pay for the construction of two different entrances to the same church.

and west window, as an opportunity for elaborate display. These choices may have had a number of consequences for those observing or contemplating such towers. Firstly, the combination of architectural and decorative choices would have emphasised the grand western entrance to the church. A secondary effect of the increased emphasis on buttresses and the decoration of parapets would have been to draw the attention to the whole form of the tower. In order to attempt to understand how contemporary observers would have received and reacted to these forms and displays it is necessary to investigate the cultural milieu in which they were presented. In particular, it is important to set out the ways in which a parish tower functioned, and thus animated the signs and motifs that it expressed.

Logically, west doors must have served a different purpose from lateral entrances. If, in 1479, Sir John Knevet had commissioned a tower with a west door as well as a new south aisle with a door and porch at New Buckenham, he must have intended both entrances to be used, but in different ways.[152] If they were to perform the same function, there would have been no need to build two of them. The entrances are differentiated in their dimensions and surrounding decoration: the west door is framed by a greater profusion of heraldic emblems and at 3.4 metres tall is nearly a metre taller than the south door. Not only does this create an impression of greater grandeur, but the increased height allowed for the paraphernalia of liturgical processions, such as processional crosses, banners and tabernacles to be carried into the church unimpeded.

At East Harling, about seven miles west of New Buckenham, 14 years after Sir John Knevet commissioned his new works, Geoffrey Elyngham of Fersfield left money for a gallery to be constructed under the tower with the express intention of removing the bell ringers from the floor of the tower where they had previously been impeding the progress of liturgical processions.[153] It is not always possible to be certain of the incidence of ringing galleries constructed in the late Middle Ages as the interior arrangements of church towers have been subsequently much altered, not least by the insertion of organ lofts, though there are a number of original examples remaining, most famously that at Cawston

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[152] See note 10 above.
[153] "*Item volo quod executores mei fieri faciant unum solarium in campanili dicte ecclesie obsimile et instar solaria in campanili ecclesie de Estherlyng ut procession festivis diebus subter pulsantes procedat,*" cited in Cattermole, 1990, p66 and see Chapter 1, p6 above.

commissioned by the local plough guild. However, to judge from the available evidence, it seems highly probable that they were constructed only in towers with west doors, thereby confirming the need to have an unobstructed western processional route at a liturgical moment when the bells would have been rung.

That the main function of west doors was processional rather than for the common ingress afforded by lateral doors is confirmed by the instructions given in the rubric of the liturgy that concerned the festive processions that left the confines of the church. All the manuscript Processionals that follow the Sarum rite in the British Library and in the Bodleian Library in Oxford stipulate in their rubrics that the western door of the church be used for the most important liturgical procession that enters the church from outside, that of Palm Sunday.[154] The manuscripts indicate that the Palm Sunday procession made its third station at the western entrance to the church " *autem statione, eat processio per medium claustri a dextra manu usque ad ostium ecclesiae occidentale, cantando hanc antiphonam sequentem…Hic fiat tertia statio ante praedictum ostium ecclesiae occidentale* ."[155] Following this the procession entered the church through the same door "*His finitis intrent ecclesiam per idem ostium sub feretro et capsula reliquiarum*" the choir singing "*Ingrediente Domino in Sanctam Civitatem… .*"[156]

With two exceptions, it is not known where these Processionals were used, but it is clear from the rubrics that the liturgy was designed for a great church and that if these particular books were used in minor secular churches the form of the various processions would have had to be adapted to suit the particular topography of the buildings and their environments.[157] In particular,

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[154] Secular churches in the diocese of Norwich had probably adopted the liturgical rite developed at Salisbury cathedral in the 11th century and known as the Use of Sarum, in the mid 13th century. Seminar given by Professor Nigel Morgan at the University of East Anglia, 01/12/2008, and a lecture given at Salisbury Cathedral by Professor John Harper, Director of the Royal School of Church Music, 22/09/2007.
Processionals were liturgical handbooks produced specifically to be carried by the choir and other principal protagonists during processions and, so, tend to be of small size. Those consulted at the British Library are: BL Add. 57534; BL Harley 2942; BL Harley 2945. At the Bodleian Library, Oxford: Bodl.Bodley 637; Bodl.lat.liturg.e.7; Bodl.liturg.6; Bodl.liturg.408; Bodl.Rawl.liturg.d.4; Bodl.Rawl.liturg.e.45; Bodl.Rawl.liturg.e.46; Bodl.Rawl.liturg.e.46; Bodl.Selden Sup.37.
[155] BL Harley 2945, fol. 52v. The citations are taken from this ms. But are very similar to all those consulted.
[156] BL Harley 2945, fol. 53r.
[157] BL Add.57534, made c.1380/90 was used and adapted for the Hospital of St Giles, Norwich. BL Harley 2942, made c.1400 was used and adapted for St Sepulchre Parish Church, London. I am grateful to Professor Nigel Morgan for this information.

Palm Sunday processions in most Norfolk parish churches before the last quarter of the fourteenth century would have had to have used a lateral door in the absence of a western entrance. With the adoption of Corpus Christi as a popular festival in England from the first quarter of the fourteenth century, together with the increasing elaboration of and popular participation in processional activity, both civic and religious (if such a clear distinction can be drawn) in the later Middle Ages, it became more desirable for parish churches to have dedicated, grand processional entrances that complied with the liturgical prescriptions of the Sarum rite.[158] These new portals had to provide an appropriate setting for the exercise of the liturgy. In order to understand how they contextualised the increasingly dramatic rituals of the period it is necessary to consider the forms of the relevant liturgical processions and how they worked both materially and conceptually in the perceptions of participants and observers.

The Palm Sunday procession was one of the grandest and most elaborate in the calendar.[159] The Use of Sarum prescribed four stations in the processional route around the church.[160] The first act in the ritual was for the palms to be blessed inside the church after which the priest and other clerks, followed by the choir and congregation, left the church and proceeded to the first station, where the deacon read a passage from the gospel of St Matthew (21:1-9). This tells of Christ approaching Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives and sending two of his disciples into the city for an ass on which he makes his triumphant entry into the city accompanied by cheering crowds singing Hosanna. The gospel concluded

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All the rubrics that refer to processions outside the church refer to a procession through the cloisters and through the monks' cemetery. This reflects the topography of Salisbury Cathedral, for which the liturgy was devised.

[158] The subject of liturgical processions is covered extensively in Bailey, T., *The Processions of Sarum and the Western Church*, Toronto, 1971, and in Rubin, M., *Corpus Christi: the Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture*, Cambridge, 1991.

[159] This description of the Palm Sunday procession follows that given by Tyrer, J.W., *Historical Survey of Holy Week*, Oxford, 1932, pp 49-65. See also to Erler, M.C., "Palm Sunday Prophets and Processions and Eucharistic Controversy" in *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol.48, No.1 (1995), pp 58-81; *Processionale ad usum insignis ac praeclare Ecclesiae Sarum* (Edited by W.G.Henderson from the edition printed at Rouen by M. Morin in 1508) Leeds, 1882, p126; Bailey, 1971; Duffy, 1992, pp 22-27; Davidson, C., *Festivals and Plays in Late Medieval Britain*, Aldershot, 2007, especially pp169-86.

[160] Pamela Blum has shown how the second and third stations in the Sarum Palm Sunday liturgy were displaced from the door to the south transept to the west front at both Wells and Salisbury in the course of the thirteenth century. See Blum, P.Z., "Liturgical Influences on the Design of the West Front at Wells and Salisbury" in *Gesta*, Vol.25, No.1, Essays in Honor of Whitney Snow Stoddard (1986), pp 145-150. This revision to the ritual is what is used in the rite as set out in the later medieval Processionals in the British Library and the Bodleian Library

with "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest."[161]

Then, a second smaller procession joined the main one, bearing a feretory with relics from which was suspended the sacrament in a pyx. At this point, three clerks, detached from the procession, sang to the assembled congregation a passage from Zechariah (9:9), "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."[162] After responses, the clerks then sang a text from Isaiah (63:1), "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save."[163] After further responses, the clerks sang "This is he who, like a guiltless lamb, is delivered to death, the death of death, the Devourer of hell, by his death bestowing life, as of old the blessed seers sang prophetically," not an Old Testament prophetic text like those sung before, but included in the liturgy to validate and highlight the importance of prophetic witness.[164]

These prophetic declarations were, from the later fifteenth century, complemented by a boy dressed as a prophet who sang "Jerusalem look toward the east and see, lift up thine eyes Jerusalem, see the power of the king" (Baruch 5:5), followed by "Behold the Saviour comes to loose thee from chains; lift up your heads" (Luke 21:28) and lastly "Behold, your redemption draweth nigh", also taken from (Luke 21:28).[165]

The procession then gathered at the west door of the church where a number of boys *in eminenti loco* sang the hymn *Gloria, laus et honor* antiphonally.[166] Then, singing *Ingrediente Domino*, the procession entered the church through the west door.

Two important observations must be made about this liturgy in the context of an examination of west towers. Firstly, the procession was both

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[161] Matthew 21:9, King James Version.

[162] Zechariah 9:9, King James Version.

[163] Isaiah 63:1, King James Version

[164] Erler, 1995, p64.

[165] For the addition of the boy prophet to the liturgy see Davison, N., "So which way round did they go? The Palm Sunday Procession at Salisbury," in *Music and Letters* Vol.61, 1980, p.12.

[166] Blum, 1986, pp.146-148. The words of the first verse of the hymn indicate that it was appropriate that boys should sing the hymn: "*Gloria, laus et honor tibi sit, Rex Christe, redemptor: Cui puerile decus prompsit Hosanna pium*".

mimetic and dramatic in nature. The choir and congregation that left the church with palms in hand at the beginning of the procession were playing the role of the joyous welcoming crowd that left Jerusalem to welcome Christ from the Mount of Olives. The second procession that met this congregation took the part of Christ and his disciples coming from the Mount of Olives. The presence of Christ was signalled by the sacrament borne by this secondary procession in a pyx. This was reinforced by the prophetic texts intoned by the three clerks, which clearly indicated Eucharistic welcome. The addition of the boy's prophetic song served to reinforce this concept with the very indicative texts, "Jerusalem, lift up thine eyes, see the power of the king" and "Behold, the Saviour comes…lift up your heads", that serve to illustrate the presence of the sacrament. An eyewitness account of this moment in the liturgy, describing a Palm Sunday procession at Long Melford, probably in the Marian period of the mid-sixteenth century, recounts how the boy prophet pointed with a "thing" in his hand at the sacrament as he commanded the congregation to "see the power of the king". He is described only as being "in a high place"[167]

As the congregation gathered at the west door the *Gloria Laus* was sung from a high position, and it is reported that the young choristers threw cakes and flowers down to the crowd.[168] This was a re-enactment of a joyous moment and was followed by the conjoined procession entering the church in imitation of Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

Further evidence of the dramatic nature of the Palm Sunday procession has been revealed by Erler's research into the late-medieval accounts of London parish churches.[169] These show that the churchwardens' increasingly onerous preparations for the procession included renting costumes, wigs and false beards for the prophets as well as the platforms necessary for the liturgical set-pieces. The 1531 accounts of St Stephen Walbrook even reveal that the churchwardens hired wigs from John English, who is recorded as having been the leader of Henry VII's King's Players a decade and a half earlier.

In Germany, where the less dramatic and elaborate Roman rite was followed, there was a tradition that took hold in the later Middle-Ages of

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[167] This account was written by Roger Martyn and reproduced in Parker, W., *The History of Long Melford*, London, 1873, p.72.
[168] See Tyrer, 1932, p.58, and Erler, 1995, p.64.
[169] Erler, 1995, especially pp.65-67.

bringing into the church an image representing Christ riding on an ass at the climax of the Palm Sunday procession.[170] The wheeled wooden effigy, known as a *Palmasel*, was placed at the entrance to the church facing east and was drawn into the church at the singing of the *Gloria, laus*, followed by the *Ingrediente Domino.*

All the participants in this quasi-mimetic, dramatic ritual would have been aware of the significance of their roles in it and must have been sensitive to the context in which it was set. As they entered the church they were entering, in triumph, a representation of Jerusalem. The metaphor of a church as the heavenly Jerusalem is well known, but nowhere in medieval ritual could it have been more striking than in the drama of the Palm Sunday procession.[171] The boundary of the represented city was the city gate and it was here that the most important moment of royal *adventus* took place. Giotto's depiction of the first Palm Sunday, on the wall of the Scrovegni chapel in Padua, emphasises this notion well (Fig. 28). As Christ on the ass, with his disciples, is met by the adoring multitude, Jerusalem is represented at the right of the painting by a large, turretted city gate, opened in readiness for the triumphal entry. Tellingly, this image, emphasising the towered entrance, had become conventional before the beginning of the fourteenth century, as can be seen in an iconographically similar depiction in the Copenhagen Psalter, an English manuscript of the last quarter of the twelfth century.[172] Such a welcome at the city gate had become a commonplace in the civic entries of kings and emperors, and, not surprisingly, there was a mutual borrowing in the iconography of such rituals between the civic and the religious.

The grand and elaborate ritual dramas of royal or imperial entry into a city in the later Middle Ages leant heavily on the imagery of Christ's entry into Jerusalem. By the fifteenth century they had become events of national importance and the choreography of the pageants involved in the processions must have been known in Norfolk, probably through eye-witness accounts.

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[170] For a full account of this tradition, that continued despite Protestant objections into the 19th century, see Young, K., *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, Vol.1, Oxford, 1933, pp.94-98.
[171] Stookey, L.H.,, "The Gothic Cathedral as the Heavenly Jerusalem: Liturgical and Theological Sources," *Gesta*, Vol.8, No.1 (1969), pp. 35-41, sets out the most important contemporary medieval sources for the metaphor of a church as Jerusalem, in particular the various rites of consecration and dedication which make the connexion explicit, and further elaboration of the concept by Durandus, Suger and Bernard of Cluny.
[172] Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek, ms. Thott, 143.2. I am grateful to Professor T.A.Heslop for drawing my attention to this image.

Kipling has shown how such civic triumphs were framed with direct reference to Christ's advent and that their iconography frequently imitated the moment of Christ's entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, inviting comparisons between the monarch or emperor and Christ, and acknowledging the Christ-like role of kingship. These rituals reinforced a political ideal of a Christian polity with the monarch at its head as God's vice-regent on earth.[173]
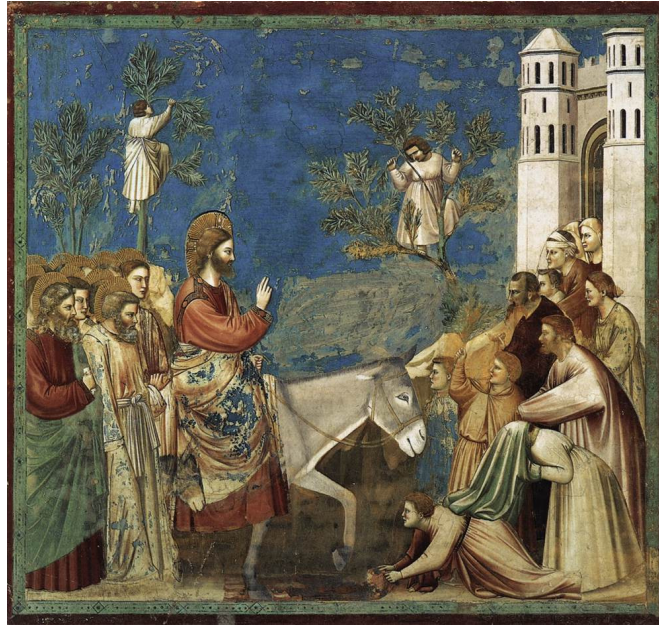
Fig. 28. Christ's Entry Into Jerusalem, Giotto, Scrovegni Chapel, Padua

One of the features of royal advent and civic triumphs in the late Middle Ages in northern Europe is the imitation of the topography of the heavenly city as the setting for the processions. As early as 1308 the city was imagined as a heavenly Jerusalem for the reception of Edward II and Queen Isabella: "then was London seen ornamented with jewels like New Jerusalem."[174] The four pageants that animated Richard II's entry into London in 1392 served to reinforce the

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[173] Kipling, G., *Enter the King: Theatre, Liturgy and Ritual in the Medieval Civic Triumph*, Oxford, 1998, pp 46, 47.

[174] "Tandem London venerunt, cui copiosa civium turba obviabant, et par regales vicos tapetos dependebant, et tunc visa est Londonia quasi nova Jerusalem monilibus ornate"; Stubbs, W. (ed.), *Chronicles of Edward I and II*, Rolls Series 76, vol. 1, London, 1882, p 152.

metaphor very clearly.[175] Each represented a different celestial place populated with angels and saints at which the royal procession stopped and with which it interacted in tableaux that suggested the Christ-like nature of Richard's kingship.[176] Most pertinently, the second pageant took the form of "a high, castle-like tower hung on ropes above the street. From the tower a youth and a maiden, dressed as angels, descended to the street 'enclosed in clouds…floating down in the air'. The youth offered a golden chalice of wine to Richard while the maiden delivered a pair of golden crowns to the King and Queen."[177] This was clearly a visual representation of the description of the New Jerusalem descending from the heavenly firmament in the Book of Revelations (21:2-3) and it is telling that the abstraction of the city was a tower. A tower or towered gateway, too, was used as a representation of the earthly Jerusalem in depictions of Christ's first coming, as has been seen in Giotto's depiction of Palm Sunday in Padua and this in turn, probably borrowed from the iconography of Roman imperial *adventus*.[178]

The depiction of a tower or towered gateway as a convenient visual image of both the earthly and heavenly Jerusalem was a relatively common contemporary device in the late Middle Ages.[179] I contend that this iconography was a key factor in the design of parish church towers in Norfolk from the late fourteenth century. The general characteristics of towers in the sample group include the emphasis on buttresses and the exploration of their aesthetic possibilities, massiveness, concentration on the portal, and the relative simplicity of the parapets that are usually crenellated. When compared with the developments in the forms of towers in other parts of the country where ambitious tower building campaigns were being carried out in this period, these characteristics are thrown into sharper definition.

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[175] The 1392 entry was the first English royal entry to have been designed with such elaborate pageantry. It was also the first for which we have descriptive records: Richard Maydiston, "Concordia: Facta inter Regem Ricardum II et Civitatem Londonie" edited by Thomas Wright, *Political Poems and SongsRelating to English History, Composed during the Period from the Accession of Edw. III. to that of Ric. III.*, Rolls Series 14, London, 1859, vol.1. pp282-300.

[176] Kipling, 1998, p 12.

[177] Kipling, 1998, p 13.

[178] See chapter 2, pp 10, 11, and Baldwin Smith, 1978, pp 8-10.

[179] Other examples include various depictions in The Angers Apocalypse Tapestries by Nicolas Bataille and Robert Poincon, 1375-82; 'La triumphant et solennelle entrée de Charles prince des hespignes en sa ville de Bruges', 1515, by Remy du Puys, Osterreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, ms.2591, f. 41r. Towers and gateways figured strongly in the iconography of Henry V's 1415 Agincourt Triumph in London, see Kipling, 1998, pp205-209.

In Somerset, Devon and Gloucestershire, where the development of west towers from the late fourteenth century was similarly energetic, there was more emphasis on verticality, slenderness and surface articulation.

Fig. 29. Chewton

At Chewton (Fig. 29) and St John Baptist, Glastonbury, towers representative of general trends amongst the more ambitious commissions in Somerset, verticality and aspiration are expressed through the narrow angle buttresses that are set back to let the corners of the towers run dramatically upwards through all stages. At the belfry stage the buttresses terminate in slender spirelets that stand detached from the corners of the towers and project to just below the parapet, a typical

west-country motif. The parapets are more complex and elaborate than any Norfolk equivalent, even the pierced examples at Swaffham and Hilborough, with tall corner pinnacles, further subsidiary pinnacles springing from the centre of each side, and fine, narrow spirelets that run up the side of the pinnacles and that are attached at only two points. The crenellations of the parapet are pierced and in their elaboration the notion of castellation is almost totally lost. The intermediary stage between the west window and the belfry openings is heavily articulated with blind panelling in both towers. At Chewton the design of the belfry openings is replicated in these panels and is carried round all four faces of the tower, so the upper parts are almost totally covered with carved stonework. It was not uncommon for an extra intermediary stage to be included, as at St Mary Magdalene and St James, both in Taunton, thereby increasing the sensation of height and slenderness, and in the surface articulation reducing the impression of solidity that a blank wall creates, replacing it with lightness and ethereality.

East Anglian towers have much more of a tendency towards four-square massiveness. This is, no doubt, partly a result of the manipulation of the materials used in their construction. However, in the comparative lack of elaboration in their upper parts and the emphasis on the west window and door there is a consequent focus on the west face, which presents much more of a façade than the towers of the south-west of England where similar patterns of elaborate architectural decoration appear on all four sides.[180]

The concentration on one face helps to suggest the notion of towered city gates that generally present only one facade. The emphasis on buttresses, the large areas of blank wall articulated only with horizontal string courses and the simple crenellations of parapets connotative of military architecture work together with the large and expressively framed doors to suggest this metaphor. Although even the most four-square of Norfolk towers, such as Happisburgh, is sufficiently different from contemporary town gates, such as the South Gate that still stands in King's Lynn (Fig. 30), in the totality of its aspect to lead modern sensibilities to categorise it in a different class of building, it is my contention that details and individual architectural elements would have suggested the

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[180] This feature of parish church towers in the south-west of England may reflect the influence of the great central towers of Worcester and Gloucester cathedrals as well as William Wynford's western towers at Wells.

notion of the city gate to a medieval observer of a typical Norfolk tower of the fifteenth century.[181]

Fig. 30. South Gate, King's Lynn

Such gates were usually crenellated and flanked by heavy buttresses or turrets and were usually depicted with these features emphasised, from the image of the Heavenly Jerusalem in the Trinity Apocalypse[182] of the mid-thirteenth century to the depiction of the same subject in Remy du Puys' account of Charles V's entry into Bruges in 1515.[183] Furthermore, the development of collegiate gatehouse architecture in the fifteenth century, emphasising verticality with multi-staged tower-like structures between flanking polygonal turrets, finds strong echoes in the design of some of the more ambitious East Anglian towers from the middle

[181] The South Gate as it stands today was built in 1437 by Robert Hertanger and partly rebuilt in 1520 by Nicholas and Thomas Harmer. See Pevsner and Wilson, Norfolk 2, 1999, p475.
[182] Cambridge, Trinity College, ms.R.16.2., f.25v.
[183] Vienna, ms.2591, f.41r.

of the century. The towers at Wymondham, Redenhall, Laxfield and Eye (the latter pair in north-east Suffolk) clearly share some of the same characteristics, as well as the general aesthetic approach, as the gatehouses of Queen's College, St John's College (Fig. 31) and Christ's College, Cambridge.

Fig. 31. St John's College, Cambridge

Some of the smaller design details seen in a number of Norfolk towers serve to suggest the notion of a city gate. It was usual for mouldings around doors to extend either to the ground or to the plinth course. The form of the mouldings might change from the vertical elements to the mouldings of the arch, often with hollow chamfers, brackets or fillets springing from the capitals of

engaged half shafts, as at New Buckenham. From the late fourteenth century it became more common to carve mouldings that continued uninterrupted around the whole of the door, as can be seen at Blakeney and Shropham, for example. However, a number of west doors in Norfolk towers have plain chamfers at their sides, from which the mouldings of the door arch spring without the interruption of a clear architectural division, such as an order of capitals. At Sparham and Hackford (Plate 57a), this type of door frame was built in towers of relatively modest design, seventy-two and fifty-nine feet tall respectively, neither possessing much surface articulation or decoration. However, what seems like coherent plainness in such towers cannot be explained as a lack of ambition when the motif is found in much grander and more elaborate examples, such as Northrepps (Plate 98c), Feltwell and North Elmham. In short, the choice to surround a door with plain chamfered freestone rather than with moulded masonry seems to have been one dependent on the wish to convey a certain impression, rather than one of frugality. The prototype of this motif can be found in the design of city and collegiate gates. The South Gate at King's Lynn has a similarly chamfered frame at about 30 degrees to the external wall, as do the three Cambridge gatehouses mentioned above. It seems likely that plain chamfers were routinely chosen for such gates for reasons of facility and practicality. A steady flow of cart and livestock traffic would have been damaging to any fragile moulded elements that projected from the plain of the chamfers surrounding entrances. Even where there was a concern to have carved mouldings around gates, such as at the very elaborately moulded Erpingham Gate into Norwich Cathedral precinct, the carved elements begin at a much higher level than in other types of portal, well over a metre and a half above the ground – sufficient to clear the axles of even large carts. So, it seems that while plain chamfers were originally built in city gates for utilitarian reasons, they were chosen for parochial west doors to suggest the gatehouse prototype and often featured in elaborate iconographic programmes.

All the towers of the sample group were found to have double doors at their western entrances, where the original arrangement could be ascertained. Lateral entrances, whether inside porches or not, tend to have single doors.[184]

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[184] I am grateful to Helen Lunnon for bringing this topic to my attention.

Although, the difference in scale may account for this in part, there is no doubt that the difference in impression to an observer approaching either type of door would have been significant. Municipal and collegiate gateways had double doors, whereas single doors are more suggestive of domestic architecture. That the double doors of a western portal open onto the axis of the church gives an enhanced impression of a grand entrance, with the altar and rood directly visible on approach. The lateral position of porch entrances, on the other hand, is far more consonant with the domestic arrangements of contemporary vernacular architecture, where the dwelling would have been entered through a door in its longer side.

The dramatic and mimetic nature of the Palm Sunday procession in the Sarum liturgy finds its echo in the form of many western towers constructed in Norfolk from the late fourteenth century. That they were in part conceived as copies of city gates is revealed by their iconography, both in their general form as well as in their details. This metaphor would have been animated by their role as settings for the grand entry into the church on Palm Sunday, when both clergy and congregation played their parts in the drama of Christ's entry into Jerusalem. It would have been obvious to all participants in the ritual that the tower represented the towered entrance of the historical Jerusalem, and this notion was reinforced by the employment of certain cues in the design and material of the building, as well as by the iconography of the grand civic entries that, in their turn, drew on the image of Christ's *adventus.*

If west towers were conceived as appropriate settings for a Palm Sunday ritual that imitated Christ's triumphal entry into the earthly, historic Jerusalem at the beginning of Holy Week, the most important week in the Christian calendar, how did they relate to the other great extra-mural procession of the late Middle Ages: Corpus Christi?[185] While the Palm Sunday liturgy was a celebration and re-enactment of what was believed to have been an historical event, Corpus Christi celebrated a spiritual mystery; the miraculous embodiment of Christ's body in the bread of the eucharistic sacrament. It reflected the increasingly devotional

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[185] For a description of the Corpus Christi procession in the Sarum Rite, see Bailey, 1971, p17; for a discussion of the development of the Corpus Christi feast and its place in late medieval culture and society, see Rubin, 1991, pp 164-287.

nature of the relationship between the eucharistic host and its observers, which had grown throughout the later Middle Ages.

The feast of Corpus Christi had its origins in the devotional practices of a group of beguines in Liege in the middle of the thirteenth century, inspired by a "fascination with the tangible, physical contact with the suffering Christ, through his offering of himself in so vulnerable a form to the world.[186] Christ in the eucharist could be watched, adored, smelt, touched and taken into one's body; and for some of these experiences little mediation was necessary."[187] It was this direct access to the body of Christ, if only seen during the ritual of the mass, that so excited late medieval parish congregations. Where the use of the eucharistic host in the Palm Sunday liturgy signified the presence of Christ arriving in the earthly Jerusalem in a triumphal entry, the bread and wine of the sacrament in the ritual of the mass became the body and blood of the sacrificial and redeeming Christ, the Christ who suffered on the cross and who triumphed over death to enter the kingdom of heaven. It was this version of the eucharistic bread that was celebrated at Corpus Christi: "a eucharistic feast as an apogee of eucharistic devotion."[188] By 1318 the feast had become established in the province of Canterbury.[189]

Although the papal bull that founded the feast of Corpus Christi in 1264 did not provide for a procession, the custom of processing the eucharistic host outside the church was common practice by the middle of the fourteenth century and became regularised locally.[190] Rubin suggests that this development should be seen in the wider context of the growth of processional enterprise, both civic and religious, in most towns and parishes.[191] Corpus Christi was celebrated on the second Thursday after Pentecost and its position in the calendar, at the beginning of summer, encouraged outdoor festivities. It soon became a festival

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[186] The feast of Corpus Christi was first officially celebrated in Liege in 1246 following the pastoral letter of Bishop Robert of Turotte *Inter alia mira.* The feast was to be celebrated " feria quinta proxima post octavas Trinitatis". Rubin, 1991, p.174.
[187] Rubin, 1991, p.168.
[188] Rubin, 1991, p.170.
[189] "Anno Domini millesimo trecentesimo decimo octavo incoepit festivitas de Corpore Christi generaliter celebrari per totam ecclesiam Anglicanam", *Historia monasterii sancti Petri Gloucestriae* I, Hart, W.H. (ed.), London, 1867, p.44.
[190] The feast was sponsored by Pope Urban IV, who as Jacques Pantaleon had been an archdeacon in the diocese of Liege, before becoming Bishop of Verdun and Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. It was established in his bull *Transiturus* in 1264.
[191] Rubin, 1991, p.243.

of great significance in many localities, perhaps due to its date and also because
of the opportunity it gave for local civic and hierarchical interests to be
demonstrated through participation in the procession.[192] It was generally from the
second half of the fourteenth century "as the symbolic possibilities inherent in
the ritual unfolded, that the greater involvement of corporations, town councils
and crafts becomes apparent".[193]

The only liturgical model for eucharistic public processions at the
beginning of the fourteenth century was the Palm Sunday ritual as discussed
above, though the eucharist had come to be used as a representation of Christ's
mortal remains in a similarly mimetic re-enactment in the drama of the burial and
resurrection in the Easter Sepulchre. The manuscript Processionals in the British
Library and the Bodleian Library do not include instructions for the Corpus
Christi liturgy, but a printed Processional of the early sixteenth century stipulates
that, here again, the west door should be used: "*Ante missam procedat processio
per medium chori et ecclesiae, exiens per ostium occidentale circumvendo
ecclesiam....*"[194] As in the Palm Sunday liturgy the feast was celebrated with a
procession down the middle of the choir and out of the west door, though it did
not repeat the different Palm Sunday stations, which were only relevant to that
particular ritual. It continued around the church and may have left the churchyard
according to local custom, to return through the west door and back to the
altar.[195] It was a principal double feast and was to be celebrated *in capis
sericis*.[196] This indicated that not only was the rite to be conducted by clergy
wearing silk copes, but that it should also be celebrated with reliquaries and
banners. The liturgy had been composed by St Thomas Aquinas and was
accompanied by the intensely eucharistic hymns *Lauda, Syon* and *Pange, lingua*,
but for the procession, as well as *Salve festa dies*, the Palm Sunday hymns *Gloria*

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[192] There has been a significant amount of research on the political, civic and social interests that
were juxtaposed on the Corpus Christi procession and associated festivities in the later Middle
Ages. See, for example, Phythian-Adams, C., "Ceremony and the Citizen: the Communal Year at
Coventry 1450-1550", in *Crisis and Order in English Towns, 1500-1700*, ed. Clark, P., and
Slack, P., London, 1972, pp. 57-85; Johnston, A.F., "The Guild of Corpus Christi and the
Procession of Corpus Christi in York" in *Medieval Studies* 38, 1976, pp.372-84.
[193] Rubin, 1991, p.258.
[194] *Processionale ad usum insignis ac praeclare Ecclesiae Sarum* (Edited by W.G.Henderson
from the edition printed at Rouen by M. Morin in 1508) Leeds, 1882, p126.
[195] For a fuller description of the processional route and its variations see Bailey, 1971, pp.17,
174-5.
[196] *Processionale ad usum insignis ac praeclare Ecclesiae Sarum*, p.126.

laus and *Rex venit* were sometimes sung.[197] As the prime object of the procession was the exposition of the eucharist, the host was carried and displayed in an ornate monstrance or other transparent vessel, which could only be borne by members of the clergy. It was covered by a canopy supported by four staves which would have been carried by prominent lay members of the local community and accompanied by banners, also carried by the laity.[198] Wills, parish registers and fraternity records give some indication of the contributions made by the laity to the embellishment of these processional materials and hint at the importance given to the festival. John Welborne (d.1381) left Lincoln Minster:

> One great Fertur silver and gilt wt one cross Iles and one stepell
> in ye Middle and one Crosse in ye toppe wth twentye Pinnacles
> and an Image of Our Lady…and it is set in a Table of wood, and a
> thing in ye middle to put in ye sacrament when it is borne
> weighing xvijxx unces.[199]

This tabernacle for carrying the eucharist clearly drew on contemporary ecclesiastical architecture for its form thereby using the metaphor of a church as an image of the heavenly Jerusalem in order to place the host in a heavenly context. William Bruges, first Garter King-at-Arms, bequeathed funds in 1449 for a grand feretory of "gilt wood and silver, adorned with jewels, and surrounded by angels carrying emblems of the Passion enclosing a silver gilt cup for the eucharist" expressly to be carried on Corpus Christi at Stamford.[200] Others left or gave considerable sums for the provision of the canopy to cover the feretory or monstrance, including Beatrice Balle, John Ode and Marion Mason who funded the canopy for the procession at St Peter Mancroft in Norwich in 1458.[201]

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[197] Bailey, 1971, p.174,5.
[198] Rubin, 1991, pp.247,8.
[199] MacGarry, L., *The Holy Eucharist in Middle English Homiletic and Devotional Verse*, Washington D.C., 1936, p.149.
[200] Peck, F., *Academia tertia Anglicana, or the antiquarians annals of Stamford*, London, 1727, xiv. p.25, cited in Rubin, 1991, p.252.
[201] Blomefield, 1806, IV, p.213.

It is my contention that the importance for local communities of the Corpus Christi procession by the end of the fourteenth century, as well as the direct involvement of the laity, is one of the primary explanations for the phenomenon of grand west tower construction in Norfolk and, indeed, across many areas of the country. Now that there were two important liturgical processions that required entry into the church through a western portal, the will to construct an edifice to frame the important moment when the procession made its way from the profane to the sacred, to emphasise the notion of the church as a representation of the heavenly Jerusalem, must have been greatly strengthened.

Although there were elements of the Corpus Christi procession that were taken from the Palm Sunday liturgy, the essential nature was quite different. Where the Palm Sunday procession was a narrative and relied heavily on mimesis to re-enact an historical event, the Corpus Christi procession was devotional and symbolic. The bread represented the body of the sacrificial Christ who triumphed over death and who ascended to heaven. As the host in its elaborate tabernacle was processed through the western entrance into the church with all the elaborate panoply appropriate of a grand civic entry, it represented the triumphant entry of Christ into the heavenly Jerusalem, not the earthly or historic city. So just as towers built from the late fourteenth century onwards were often designed to suggest the towered gateway of the earthly Jerusalem, familiar from Giotto's Paduan depiction and many other medieval images, they must also have been built to connote ideas of the heavenly Jerusalem.

The metaphor of a church as the heavenly Jerusalem was well established by the end of the fourteenth century and architectural design decisions were often made to enhance this belief. In East Anglia the arrays of carved angels decorating the wooden roofs of many church naves is the most obvious sign of the wish to express the idea. Any attentive parishioner would have been aware of the image of the New Jerusalem as described by St John in the Book of Revelation:

> And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from
> God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
> (Revelation 21:2)[202]

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[202] I have used the King James version for these citations.

And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, (Revelation 21:10)

Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; (Revelation 21:11)

And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel…(Revelation 21:12)

And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. (Revelation 21:18)

And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; (Revelation 21:19)

The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolyte; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. (Revelation 21:20)

And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. (Revelation 21:21).

I contend that an examination of the designs of the towers in the sample group, and particularly of the way that building materials were exploited in many of those designs, reveals a desire to suggest the image of the new Jerusalem of the Book of Revelation. There is great emphasis in Revelation 21 on the jewels used to build the heavenly city, particularly in the layers of the foundations, and it is striking that each gate is described as being made of a single pearl. Stress is also placed on the lustre of the architecture, using crystal and clear glass to describe

the effect on the observer. It is clear that these were iconographic details that were important to late medieval minds from the way they are picked up and elaborated in the Middle English poem *Pearl*. I believe, too, that many tower designers and builders attempted to create simulacra of the walls of the new Jerusalem in their use of knapped flint to face the walls of their buildings.

The tower at New Buckenham is not ambitious in its architectural form, with the exception of the unusual arrangement of the parapet and pinnacles, but is characterised by the richness and elaboration of its surface decoration.[203] The three-light west window is relatively small, no larger than the similarly-traceried bell chamber opening. The square sound hole is tiny and emphasises the large area of almost unarticulated wall between the west window and bell chamber. Instead, the effort to elaborate the tower is concentrated in the decoration of the plinth and around the door, and in the use of knapped flint and freestone in the lower sections of the walls (Plates 91a,b) . The door is framed creating spandrels in which there are shields with a lion rampant, representing d'Aubigny, for William d'Aubigny who founded the new town of New Buckenham in the twelfth century, and the Knevet arms for the main benefactor of the tower and south aisle of the church.[204] Above the door is a freestone frieze displaying mainly Knevet family heraldry, together with the royal arms of England and the d'Aubigny lion. Either side of the door, within the motif of the outer frame which extends to the angle buttresses, are four tall narrow panels of flushwork containing precisely knapped and squared black flints. There is no indication that there has been substantial re-pointing in this area, even if there has been some repair. The flints were clearly very carefully chosen for their colour, being almost uniformly black with little intrusion of the grey or iron-affected red flints commonly seen in more random displays. They were knapped and squared with such attention that there is very little space between them as they are laid and very little mortar was needed.[205] This gives the effect of a continuous and smooth plane of luminescence even five and a quarter centuries after the flints were laid. The rest of the walls of the tower contain knapped flints with their radiant cut

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[203] Heraldry indicates that the main benefactor of the tower was Sir John Knevet, but wills containing smaller bequests were made from 1482 to 1505, see Cattermole and Cotton, p.241.
[204] Blatchly and Northeast, 2005, p.22; Blomefield, 1806, I, pp.397,8.
[205] This bears comparison, although on a much lesser scale, with the flint work of the north wall of the Bridewell in Norwich, generally held to be the finest example of medieval knapping and squaring in Norfolk.

faces exposed, although from about one and a half metres above the west window the quality of the work declines. This may reflect a substantial break in the building campaign, or could reflect a later re-pointing that did not take account of the importance of knapped flint. The regularity of the quoins from this point would seem to support the second hypothesis. All the exposed flints show knapped faces, although they are not squared and there is some irregularity in the colouration, even if the large majority are black. They are interspersed with small pieces of freestone, much of which seems to be dressed and probably represents masonry from an earlier building, laid at more or less regular intervals. The surface of the wall is smooth and little lime mortar is visible, once again testifying to the care with which the flint and stone was laid. The faces of the western buttresses display flushwork panels of a similar type and quality to those around the west door to their full height (Plate 91c). On the south-west buttress, just below the first set-off, are two flushwork panels containing the crowned letters TR above the Mary monogram. On the north-west buttress the Mary monogram is above the crowned letter T. High on all four buttresses three flushwork panels with crowned letters reading downwards O, T, M. Blatchly and Northeast have suggested that the lower panels may be intended to read "*Tu Regina Maria*", an imprecation to the Queen of Heaven, and that the upper panels read "*O Te Martine*" and may have recalled the invocation to the patron saint familiar to parishioners as "*O Martine Turonensis*", St Martin of Tours.[206]

The effect made by a wall of knapped flint depends on a number of considerations, which include the provenance of the material, the time that the knapped face has been exposed to the elements, the uniformity of colour and the amount of mortar used between the flints. Recently quarried flint from a good seam when newly knapped presents a brilliance that is akin to obsidian or polished glass, especially when laid regularly in a smooth plane. If uniformly black flints are used the effect is enhanced.[207] The effect is diminished over time through oxidisation and chipping, though at New Buckenham the impact can still be understood when the sun is reflected off the flushwork panels of the south-west buttress in the mid afternoon. That some patrons opted to face the walls of

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[206] Blatchly and Northeast, 2005, p.22 , propose these interpretations on the suggestions of Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch.
[207] I am most grateful to Richard Hyde for a practical demonstration of these effects and of the practice of knapping and the use of lime mortar in building a flint wall.

towers and other parts of the church in such a manner when it would have increased the cost and time needed to complete the project, when many others chose to use a simpler flint rubble construction throughout, which would then be rendered, indicates that the effect created by this use of material was of particular importance. The main effect is to create a glasslike brilliance which suggests very clearly the impression of radiance that is conveyed by the description in Revelation 21. At New Buckenham the work of the highest quality is reserved for the area around the door and for the faces of the buttresses. Nevertheless, knapped flints are used throughout the rest of the tower, suggesting that the concern to present the radiance of the heavenly city was total.

The most impressive local models available to tower designers for suggesting an entrance to the metaphorical New Jerusalem were the gates of conventual precincts. These were often bold and elaborate buildings that emphasised the division between the sacred realms inside their precincts and the world of the profane outside. This liminality was usually enhanced with iconographic programmes that presented the observer on approach with facades presenting signs that indicated a protected sacred enclave within. From the fourteenth century, some East Anglian examples mix religious with secular imagery, particularly dynastic heraldry, and although this is a tendency with a much longer history, it is a trait which can be observed in the decoration of many Norfolk towers built in the fifteenth century, though sacred imagery usually predominates.

In the middle of the twelfth the principal entrance to the abbey at Bury St Edmund's in north-west Suffolk was designed unambiguously as a tower (Fig. 32). It is the only part of Abbot Anselm's work that remains intact. Although most of the formal details of the architecture are clearly very different from parish church towers of the late Middle Ages, the position of the building is illuminating. It is built on a direct western axis about two hundred feet from the west front of the great abbey church. It would have created a towered entrance for those contemplating the church from outside the precinct wall and emphasised the importance of what was within, creating a notional entrance to the church as well as an actual one to the abbey grounds, stressing the liminal.

While it set the tone, however, Bury's gateway did not determine those towered entrances that were to follow.

Fig. 32. Bury St Edmund's

Many East Anglian conventual gatehouses were built or rebuilt in the fourteenth century, however, and it is in the details of these that models for much of the iconography of later parish towers can be found. The gatehouse of Butley Priory in south-east Suffolk impresses with its scale, architectural elaboration and richness of decoration (Fig. 33). It is an imposing statement of power, wealth and influence presented to the world outside its Augustinian priory. It can be dated from heraldic decoration to 1320 -1325, during the rule of prior William

Geytone (1311-1332), and is thus a candidate for the earliest surviving example of the use of flint flushwork.[208]

Fig. 33. Butley Priory

Although in its totality it does not much resemble later parish church towers, particularly in having two entrances, one for pedestrians and the other for carts, as well as a further two side doors, many of its constituent elements are important prototypes that must have impressed those who knew them and were in a position to influence tower designs. The gatehouse, which faces north, is massive and complicated in its design. A central two-bay vaulted passage is flanked by large chamber blocks accessed directly through arches off the main central block. These in turn give access to two tower-like blocks that project north flanking the central façade of the building. These blocks have two storeys in their present state, though their size and the configuration of their buttresses strongly suggest that they would have had another stage, which Emery contends

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[208] Emery, A., *Greater Medieval Houses of England and Wales,* Vol. 2, Cambridge, 2000, pp 53-56.

would have been crenellated.[209] The central section of the north face of the building has a gable and in its totality recalls a church façade rather more than a normal gatehouse. It is richly decorated with architectural details and emblems. The spandrels of the entrance arches contain complicated geometrical flushwork designs above the pedestrian door and cusped trefoil flushwork daggers above the cart gateway. Above these is a remarkable frieze with five orders of heraldic shields set in a chequer pattern, alternating with limestone *fleur-de-lys* emblems set in knapped blue-grey flint panels.[210] Above this level is a much-restored two-light window flanked by a large flushwork panel on either side, imitating two-light windows with quatrefoil mouchette tracery, complete with masonry dripmoulds which, though having no practical purpose, serve to heighten the verisimilitude of the illusion. The uppermost storey beneath the gable contains three image niches, the central one taller and narrower than the flanking pair. The inner facing walls of the flanking towers have large panels of flushwork chequers and their outer faces have further flushwork designs that imitate two-light windows with complicated tracery patterns. In the faces of the innermost of the buttresses that support the flanking towers are trefoil-headed image niches that are now filled with flint pebbles.[211] In short, there are many of the elements that can be found in profusion in the material of the Norfolk towers in the research sample.

The emphasis on the heraldic frieze above the entrance is widely seen in the designs of East Anglian parish church towers, sometimes exhibiting the arms of benefactors as at Cawston, New Buckenham, Ingham and Redenhall, at other times displaying a range of blank shields such as those at Wymondham, Southrepps or Brisley that merely suggest heraldry. The blocks that project from the façade at Butley gather anyone approaching the entrance in a welcoming manner and create the same sensation as many of the more massive buttresses that support later towers. This is particularly true of angle rather than diagonal buttresses and is evident, for example, at Salle, Cawston, Castle Acre and Deopham. Flushwork chequer patterns are commonly found on towers across

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[209] Emery, 2000, p 54.
[210] The employment of dynastic heraldic emblems on church towers is examined in a sociological context in the following chapter.
[211] The flushwork at Butley is of such a complexity and boldness that suggests that, although it may be the earliest surviving example, it was not the earliest use of the technique.

Norfolk, sometimes on the plinth as at Wood Dalling or Winterton-on-Sea, or above the door as at Blakeney or St Giles-on-the-Hill in Norwich. The opportunity created by the casual pattern of the arrangement of stone quoins was often exploited to make chequer designs on the faces of buttresses.

Fig. 34. Ethelbert Gate, Norwich

The innovative use of flint flushwork is mirrored in the design of the Ethelbert gate in the wall of Norwich Cathedral close (Fig. 34). The Cathedral was, until the dissolution, also a priory and the gate led into a monastic precinct and had the same symbolic resonance as other such gates at Bury St Edmund's or

Butley. It has been extensively restored, yet antiquarian drawings, the most helpful of which is that of John Adey Repton of 1803, show that the present building is broadly faithful to the design of the gate before restoration, even if the execution of that design is decidedly of the twentieth century.[212] Architecturally, it is simpler than Butley Priory gatehouse, but its iconographic programme is equally elaborate and complex. The west façade of the gatehouse is generally accepted to have been completed a decade earlier than Butley in 1316, according to the evidence of the communar's roll of 1316 itemising expenditure of £115 8s. 5d. for *expensis circa portas*. The façade was built in three registers with a large single entrance arch leading into a vaulted passageway. At either side are pilaster buttresses with gabled and crocketted image niches. In the spandrels of the arch are figures of a man with a sword and a dragon carved in relief opposing each other. Above this is a horizontal frieze of repeated quatrefoils carved in low relief delineating the lower register from the middle. Above this is a horizontal band of flushwork chequers supporting a complex series of gabled niches, some of which would have contained images while others framed the windows of the small chapel dedicated to St Ethelbert that was built above the entrance passageway.[213] The upper register is a parapet that conceals the gatehouse roof. It has a small central gable that seems more symbolic than practical and suggests that the presence of a gable was desirable as a signifier and may explain the prominent gable at Butley. This motif is not echoed in the design of church towers with the notable exception of Deopham where the singular parapet has a similarly impractical gable and also exhibits a flushwork wheel design on all four faces (Plate 32b). The upper register of the Ethelbert gate has three such flushwork wheels and it must be concluded that the designer of the Deopham parapet was strongly influenced by the design of this section of the gatehouse.

The Ethelbert gate was rebuilt after damage suffered in riots in 1272 and the iconography of the spandrel images seems to reflect this. Veronica Sekules has convincingly argued that the man with the drawn sword and the dragon refer directly to the riots that resulted from conflict between the townspeople and the

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[212] Sekules, V., "The Gothic Sculpture" in *Norwich Cathedral: Church, City and Diocese, 1096-1996*, Atherton, I., Fernie, E., Harper-Bill, C. and Smith, H. (eds), London, 1996, p200.
[213] Sekules, 1996, p201. Eric Fernie has suggested that the arrangement of these niches reflects the arrangement of the tympanum in the prior's doorway in the cathedral cloister

priory, via a reading of Isaiah 14:29-31.[214] In any case, this image introduced the motif of figures carved in relief and attitudes of combat in the spandrels of entrance arches that can be seen around a number of west doors as mentioned above. The comparison with the figures of the wild man and the dragon set in a similarly foliate context in the spandrels at Cawston is particularly striking and it is difficult to believe that the latter work was not directly influenced by the former, very prominent image, carved about one hundred years earlier.

The gatehouses at Butley and Norwich are two of the more imposing examples built in East Anglia in the early fourteenth century and, I suggest, iconographically the most significant. Other impressive monastic gateways were built in the region at St Benet's Abbey at Holme, Thetford Priory and at Bury St Edmunds in the fourteenth century and further prestigious entrances were constructed at Bromholm and Castle Acre Priories in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries exhibiting many of the same elements as the earlier examples, particularly in the use of heraldic emblems. All these buildings share the same concern with expressing both secular prestige as well as indicating the presence of the hallowed and sacred territory which lies behind them.

Parish church towers began to exhibit the same elements and motifs – geometric flushwork patterns, heraldic friezes, spandrel carvings and emphatic buttressing – about half a century after they were first employed at Butley and on the Ethelbert Gate. I contend that the impression made by these iconographic programmes, as well as the use of gatehouses to create facades for the buildings that lay hidden within their precincts, was a major influence on tower design. That it took 50 years or more – Worstead is the best early example and can be tentatively dated on a taxonomic basis to the third quarter of the fourteenth century – is eloquent of the nature of the transmission of sophisticated ideas about architecture from major, prestigious projects to more local, community-based commissions.

One of the features of the decoration of Norfolk towers in the fifteenth century is the profusion of carved shields, as noted a number of times previously. Although a discussion of heraldry belongs to the following chapter it is worth noting the iconographic potential of shields, whether decorated with dynastic or

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[214] For a full explanation of this interpretation see Sekules 1996, pp 201, 202.

religious heraldry, or left blank. The metaphor of God, or divine protection and salvation, as a shield throughout the Bible is a potent and frequent one. From: "the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward" (Genesis 15:1) and: "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency!" (Deuteronomy 33:29), to very relevantly: "The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour…" (2 Samuel 22:3) and the many references in Psalms, where God is described as "my strength and my shield" (Psalm 28:7), "O Lord, our shield" (Psalm 59:11) and so on, the idea is explicit. This wealth of references to shields in well known biblical texts, taken together with the notion of towers as defensive and protective entities, a medieval commonplace as expressed by Durandus and quoted at the beginning of this chapter, may help to explain their employment as emblems in the decorative schemes of towers more than on other parts of the church. They are frequently placed around entrances, often carved in the voussoirs of portal arches as at Happisburgh, and on plinths and parapets, places that were not only prominent but that were notionally the most vulnerable parts of the church.

From the end of the fourteenth century most west towers built in Norfolk were designed to be put to practical use as processional entrances as well as bell-towers. This marked a significant shift in design from earlier towers, the majority of which have no western portal. As this function was incorporated, the designs usually became more elaborate and ambitious. The material evidence reveals that many tower designers were not content simply to embrace merely the functional, but attempted to express complex religious ideas in the fabric of their projects. I suggest that one of the principal motivations behind this was the desire to combine the architectural with the liturgical in creating an ideological and metaphorical setting which would animate two of the most important processions in the religious calendar. The Palm Sunday procession had been an elaborate feature in the Sarum Rite since the eleventh century, but the Corpus Christi procession had only reached England at the beginning of the fourteenth century, and the dramatic increase in its popularity may have been a major factor in the

exponential growth in expenditure on tower building that is evident from the end of the fourteenth century.

Tower designers had a number of models available if they wished to give form to the metaphor of the Church, or of a church, as the New Jerusalem and, in particular, to the image of the towered gateway that had become a commonplace in medieval iconography when depicting the entry to Jerusalem. City and college gates could have provided inspiration for mimicking the earthly Jerusalem, appropriate to the mimetic nature of the Palm Sunday ritual. A number of tower designs seem to confirm that these models were used. For the Corpus Christi procession, models for the heavenly Jerusalem were required. The New Jerusalem of the Book of Revelation was suggested through the use of flint and its manipulation. Monastic gateways, with the clear parallel between the liminality of the precinct boundary and the division between the sacred space inside in a church and the profane outside, were adopted as models by some tower designers. The transmission of the prototypes across the sample is very uneven, of course. Some towers show very little direct influence of the iconographic models suggested in this chapter, in others, such as the grand towers at Fakenham, Salle and Cawston or the more modest examples of Northrepps, New Buckenham or Coltishall, they are clearly evident. However, the influence of the ideas that motivated some of the more ambitious designers can be seen in the general increase in size, ambition and elaboration across the sample and the indirect effect of the iconographical concerns expressed by those designers was widely felt whenever a new tower building project was commenced in Norfolk in the fifteenth or early sixteenth centuries.

It must be stressed, though, that the iconography of architecture is only one of a wide possible range of factors that could have influenced designers and benefactors when they were considering how to build their towers. However, a close examination of the architectural and decorative details, together with the more general forms, of late medieval west towers in Norfolk suggests that the interpretation of the iconography as laid out in this chapter can help to partly explain some of the strands of motivation present in the design process. The evidence of the proliferation of west doors, their architectural and decorative details, together with notional framing and "gate-like" qualities of the general forms of the towers, can best be explained, I contend, with reference to these

motivating factors. While this can never be conclusively proved, just as the minds of the men and women who paid for and built these monuments will never be known, the weight of evidence that can be brought to bear suggests that it is not overly deterministic to arrive at the conclusion that at least part of the impulse for the particular designs of many of these towers was to express religious ideology through iconographic programmes as I have asserted above.

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Chapter 5.

Towers, Patronage and the Parish Community

"For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?" (Luke 14:27-29)[215]

Introduction

Building a tall church tower was probably the greatest undertaking ever attempted by a typical parish community in the late Middle Ages. Most parish churches in Norfolk underwent programmes of reconstruction and refurbishment in the two centuries following the Black Death, but these were usually carried out piecemeal, with naves being heightened or lengthened, clerestories, aisles and chapels added, and porches being built, in separate building campaigns. While onerous, taken individually these projects involved considerably less time, labour and expenditure than the construction of a tower of the size and grandeur that was desirable to benefactors in this period. As has been noted in preceding chapters, wills provide evidence of the greater funding and time needed to complete a tower relative to other church building projects.

This chapter examines material and documentary evidence relating to the burden placed on parish communities in taking on such great construction projects and the desires and ambitions that may have motivated them to do so. Different classes of benefaction can be revealed by the fabric of a church tower as well as the surviving historical evidence relating to it. The occurrence of dynastic heraldic emblems on the bases, buttresses, around the doors and on the parapets of many towers often expresses patronage, but may also indicate a desire to commemorate those members of the community who were of sufficient social status to bear arms. However, the majority of towers do not display such emblems, and it may be supposed that they were funded in large part by humbler members of the community. How does the form of a tower reflect the material

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[215] King James Version

ambitions of those who contributed to its existence, but who could not explicitly be connected with it in the form of emblems or inscriptions? The following analysis attempts, through a close examination of a number of towers, to understand the relationship between different types of patronage, both communal and individual, and the choices made in designing a tower. It also considers how a tower could express such intangible notions as communal or parochial pride, and reveal the competition between communities in a type of *campanilismo* more commonly associated with Italian communes in the same period.

The following chapter will examine these questions of pride, politics, funding, patronage, materials and cost using a number of case studies to illustrate general tendencies that have emerged from analysis of the research data.

Wymondham

In 1446 work was started on building the new axial west tower of Wymondham church that was to replace the earlier twin-towered priory façade.[216] What resulted, about fifty years later, was the largest and almost the tallest of all the parish church towers of Norfolk (Plate 163). It stands 42.8 metres, or just over 140 feet, only a little lower than Cromer at the base of the parapet.[217] However, owing to its massiveness, square profile and lack of parapet and pinnacles, it does not seem as tall as Cromer (Plate 30), while at the same time appearing far weightier and more dominating of its surroundings.[218] It rises higher than the large octagonal tower that now stands to the east of the parish church building, once the tower over the choir of the priory church, whose eastern arm and transept can still be traced in ruins in the churchyard. The occurrence of these two very large axial towers is the most striking aspect confronting the observer of the church today.

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[216] Until the Dissolution, the parish used the western nine bays of the priory church, together with the nave north aisle. See Cattermole, P., 2007, for a full history of Wymondham Abbey.

[217] Wymondham is nearly the same height at the equivalent stage, the beginning of the parapet: 42.8m as against 44m at Cromer, but with the addition of the parapet and pinnacles Cromer is clearly higher, rising to 48.7 metres. At 12 metres wide across the west face, and 11.7 metres deep, Wymondham has a ground area nearly 20 sq metres larger than Cromer (excluding the Galilee porch of the latter).

[218] This is partly owing to the fact that Wymondham church stands in a very wide park-like churchyard, whereas Cromer and its small churchyard are closely surrounded by narrow urban streets and three and four-storey buildings.

An examination of the tower at Wymondham, the circumstances surrounding its construction and the social context in which it was made provide a number of insights into the way a tower can relates to the community that built, used and contemplated it. Matching documentation about the funding of the construction with the heraldic emblems displayed on the tower facilitates an analysis of the way in which different classes of patronage were involved. An examination of the material form in its local historical context gives a clue to the nature of communal identity and also of the political motivation behind benefaction. Furthermore, an examination of the different building phases can reveal the difficulties that a community, even one as large and wealthy as Wymondham, had in funding such an ambitious project.

The west tower is characterised not only by its size and juxtaposition with the central tower, but by its unusual profile. This is in large part created by the form of its polygonal buttresses, which are nearly vertical rather than being stepped at each set-off as is almost always the case with the buttresses of other Norfolk towers. As has been noted before in Chapter Three, the pronounced stepping of buttresses is one of the defining characteristics of most late medieval towers in East Anglia and the greatest influence on their distinctive profile. The few other towers in East Anglia with polygonal buttresses have a less stepped form than is usual, yet all have set-offs that noticeably recede. In contrast, the profile of the west tower at Wymondham, created by its near vertical buttresses, is more akin to some towers with polygonal buttresses in Wiltshire and Oxfordshire, for example at Mere, Marlborough (Fig. 35) and at Magdalen College, Oxford.[219] The buttresses are finely articulated with narrow roll mouldings set in hollows and flanked by engaged fillets running up each external corner. String courses divide each buttress into panelled sections. On the western elevation, midway between the window level and the sound hole, these panels change from being square to trefoil-headed. This division is marked around the tower by a horizontal course of chequer flushwork which coincides with the point of the gable of the nave roof (Plate 163a). This may also represent a break in the building campaign, though does not express a break in the coherence of the design aesthetic. Above the sound hole the buttresses, while maintaining the

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[219] All of these towers were under construction in the latter half of the fifteenth century and cannot have exercised any influence on the design of the Wymondham buttresses.

articulation of the lower stages, are slightly stepped at the two upper set-offs, and the design of the bell chamber opening is distinct from the lower openings. It is probable that a break in construction at this level was followed by a resumption of work carried out to a revised scheme.

Fig. 35. Marlborough

Documentary evidence, mainly bequests, shows that money was given towards building the new tower over a fifty-year period and, as was often the case, a prolonged building campaign resulted in changes of design and use of materials, reflecting successive generations of benefactors and masons.[220]

Richard Fawcett has attributed the work of the lower part of the tower to the mason who worked on the north porch of Wiveton church, whom he identifies as James Woderofe.[221] This attribution would certainly be supported by

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[220] Cattermole and Cotton, 1983, pp.275, 276.

[221] Fawcett, 1975, pp.326-394. His attribution is based on similarities between the moulding profiles of the tower stair door at Wymondham and those of the north porch at Wiveton, in which he also identifies a similar aesthetic with the moulding of the tower arch and the west door at

the prestigious and ambitious nature of the commission, one that would almost certainly have involved the patrons of the work seeking such a highly regarded mason as Woderofe, a man at or near the top of his profession.[222] However, the main features of the lower part of the west face of the tower are curiously at odds with the grandeur of the scale of the building. The west window, in particular, is small when compared to windows in other great towers such as Cromer and Southrepps and unambitious in its tracery. The west door is grander, being the same width as the window, and although its arch is two-centred, the centrings are located unusually close to each other so that it is nearly round-headed (Plate 163b). This means that the space used for dynastic heraldry in the spandrels is restricted. The shields displayed in the frieze above the door are also smaller than would be expected in a tower of this scale, and the image tabernacles either side of the entrance are likewise diminutive, especially given the large expanse of ashlar in which they are positioned. The dominant impression conveyed by the tower is one of mass, not of articulation and the emphasis on the portal is lessened by the large areas of both ashlar and knapped flint.[223]

In order to understand why the west tower at Wymondham is unlike others in the county it is necessary to examine the historical circumstances leading up to and surrounding its construction. Much is known of the history of the town and of the leading players involved in commissioning the new tower due largely to the efforts of the eighteenth-century antiquarian Francis Blomefield, together with more recent research into the extensive documentation preserved in the abbey's Muniment Room and in the Wymondham Register.[224] These reveal tensions within the local community that had a direct effect on decisions that led to the building of the tower in its massive form.

The construction of the west tower was begun following lengthy and acrimonious disputes between the people of Wymondham and its priory. The priory had been founded by William d'Albini in the manor of Wymondham,

Wymondham. The identification of the attributed work with James Woderofe is largely based on the range of dates and the prestigious nature of much of the work in question.

[222] In 1449 and 1450, around the time of the initial building campaign at Wymondham, it is known that Woderofe was employed by Henry VI at Eton College, Harvey, J., 1987, p.343.

[223] There has been much repair and repointing carried out, so it is difficult to make a judgement about the original use of materials.

[224] Blomefield, 1805, vol.2, pp.498-534; the extant documentation relating to the town, abbey and parish church is catalogued in Cattermole, P. (ed.), *Wymondham Abbey*, Wymondham, 2007, pp.268-275. The Wymondham Register is housed in the British Library, BL Cotton, Titus C VIII.

granted to him by Henry I in the first decade of the twelfth century.[225] He was also given land at Buckenham where a new town was soon established, thus creating strong links of proprietorial interest between Wymondham and New Buckenham that lasted through the Middle Ages. As occurred frequently in such situations, conflict between the monks and the local community developed, arising out of the competing interests of both parties. At its foundation the priory was endowed with considerable local lands and other property, amounting to about one-third of the original manor of Wymondham as it was at the time of the Domesday survey, together with the rectory of the parish church and the right to hold a market in the town.[226] It was made a cell of the Abbey of St Albans.

The remainder of the manor of Wymondham was sub-divided at the partition of the D'Albini estate at the beginning of the fourteenth century and by the end of the century the various manorial interests were held in large part by the Cromwell and Clifton families.[227] They exercised manorial jurisdiction over and farmed revenues from one of the wealthiest towns and parishes in Norfolk.[228] Situated on the main road from Norwich to London, just far enough from the royal centre of power in Norwich to enjoy an independent economic existence and to exercise its own hegemony, Wymondham was a successful market town and its parish was the largest in central Norfolk. However, relations between the town and gentry interests on the one hand and the monks of the priory on the other appear to have been deteriorating throughout the period. This was probably due largely to the very considerable economic privileges that the priory, and by extension the abbey of St Albans, enjoyed in the affairs of the town, chief amongst them being the ownership of the market dues and the quarterly fairs.

The problems in the relationship were exacerbated by the increasing control that St Albans exercised over the priory, manifest in the practice of the

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[225] Shopland, A., "Founders and Benefactors", in Cattermole, P., (ed.) *Wymondham Abbey*, Wymondham, 2007, pp17-20.
The name D'Albini is the earliest rendering in English historical records, though D'Aubigny and Albany have sometimes been used.
[226] Blomefield, 1805, vol.2, p498.
[227] Blomefield, 1805, vol.2, pp499-505.
[228] There are larger parishes in the poorer sandy heathland on the edge of the fens in the south-west of the county, of which Feltwell is the largest, but Wymondham is remarkable for being so large in the relatively good arable boulder clay land of central Norfolk. Unlike Feltwell, it is many times larger than its neighbouring parishes. This may have resulted from Wymondham being a minster before the organisation of the parish system in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. See Williamson, T., *The Origins of Norfolk*, Manchester, 1993.

abbot directly appointing the prior when the position became vacant. This was in breach of the foundation charter, which provided that the prior should be elected by the monks of the priory and confirmed by the abbot, but had become the normal custom by 1300.[229] By the middle of the fifteenth century the situation had become so disadvantageous to the town and gentry interests that Henry VI was petitioned for a license to apply to the Pope to sever the priory from the control of St Albans and to make it an independent house. It appears that one of the prime movers in this enterprise was Sir Andrew Ogard, a man who had gained considerable interests in the parish and various manors of Wymondham through marriage, and who became the patron of the first Abbot of Wymondham, Stephen London, when the abbey gained independence in 1448.[230] Ogard's shield is one of three displayed above the west door.[231] The other two are those of Sir John Clifton in the north spandrel, and the helm and crest of Ralph, Lord Cromwell, Henry VI's Lord Chancellor, directly above the centre of the door arch (Plate 163c). It is clear from documents surviving in the Abbey Muniment Room that these were the three principal benefactors of the new west tower and it is thus no surprise to find their emblems on the west face of the building.[232]

The tower was built following a particularly violent dispute that must be seen in the wider context of the poor relations between the priory and the parish. In 1385 the monks had ensured the physical separation of the priory church from the parish church following the construction of the new octagonal central tower over the three westernmost bays of the choir. To buttress the tower from the west, a wall was built across the nave, further isolating the parish church in the western bays of the nave. Not only was this physical manifestation of the relations between the two communities built in stone, but the monks removed the bells from the south-west tower that had been used for parish liturgy, to the new central tower. Then, in 1399, the prior gained a licence from the Pope allowing him to appropriate the income that had been used to support the vicar. The insult

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[229] Blomefield, 1805, vol.2, pp.510, 511.

[230] Hansen, C.M., 'Sir Andrew Ogard, a "Stranger Knight"', *The Genealogist* (The Journal of the American Society of Genealogists), vol.19 no.2, 2005, pp.179-186.

[231] The only known contemporary example of his arms, Cattermole, 2007. p34.

[232] For the details of the documentation concerning the building of the west tower, the fullest account is in Cattermole, 2007, pp.98-101. There are 16 other shields in a frieze above the west door, all of them blank. They seem never to have been carved, unlike the three shields referred to in the text. It is impossible to understand if they were ever painted.

was increased by the practice of the monks entering the parish church through two doors built into the wall across the nave and collecting this income from in front of the parochial altar.[233] By 1409 the situation had descended into violence, with the prior's men being assaulted by irate parishioners, so that twenty-four of the senior inhabitants of the town, including the four churchwardens, were bound over to keep the peace in July.[234]

After the disturbances of 1409, a group of parishioners attempted to assert their rights over certain parts of the church and churchyard. They chose a highly confrontational and symbolic means of doing this, by erecting a temporary wooden bellframe over the north porch in which to hang three bells that they had acquired.[235] These were rung for the parish offices, provoking the monks to complain about disturbance to their own rituals. The parishioners claimed that they were merely exercising their rights, whereas the prior counter-claimed that there had been no bells in the parishioners' north-west tower for centuries and that this particular right had fallen into dereliction. He maintained that as the parishioners had used the bells in the monks' south-west tower – those removed to the new central tower – they had voluntarily given up their right to an independent set of bells. Once more the *impasse* led to violence with some of the prior's servants being attacked in 1410 and the two doors into the parishioners' part of the church being blocked up to prevent access from the priory church. The situation was calmed by the intervention of Sir Thomas Erpingham and the matter was sent to arbitration. At length, in the summer of 1410, an agreement was reached whereby the prior's rights in the parish church were reinstated and the parishioners were allowed to keep their bells at the north-west corner of the church. In the event, they were moved to the south-west tower. However, this solution did not suit the parishioners, three thousand of whom sent a petition to the king in which they complained that "they could not hear the bells in their own low tower, that they never knew when to come to church, that their children were dying unbaptised, and that others were dying without the benefits of confession and the sacraments."[236]

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[233] Cattermole, 2007, pp.53-57.
[234] Blomefield, 1805, vol.2, pp.518,519.
[235] Details of the dispute over the bells can be found in Blomefield, 1805, vol.2, p.520; and Cattermole, 2007, pp.53-55, 99.
[236] Cattermole, 2007, p.55, based on the *Wymondham Register* (BL Cotton, Titus C VIII).

The situation was finally resolved on 14 January 1446 when an agreement was signed with the prior to convey land belonging to the priory 'in front of the great west door of the church' to the parish so that the new west tower could be built.[237] It appears that pressure had been brought to bear and that the parish had called upon its most influential supporters: Sir John Clifton and Ralph, Lord Cromwell 'the chief lords of the town of Wymondham' are recorded as giving their consent. It is also known that Sir John Clifton had already established the dimensions of the tower and that the plan of the foundations had been laid out before the deed of conveyance was signed.[238] Cattermole suggests that the agreement on the tower may have been part of the larger negotiations that saw the priory becoming an abbey. Whether or not this was so, it is clear that intervention and support from the leading local grandees was the decisive factor in getting the tower built. Furthermore, that Clifton and presumably Cromwell were involved in the design process that resulted in such a massive edifice, one that dominates the monks' tower to the east, indicates the political importance of not only the building of the tower, but its material form. The west tower at Wymondham was designed to impress with its scale. The overwhelming sensation created by the edifice is that it is much larger than its counterpart tower, and even if the quality of the carving in the door mouldings and at the corners of the buttresses is fine, the architectural details of the masonry are subsumed in the general effect of massiveness.

When Sir John Clifton died in 1447 his son-in-law, Sir Andrew Ogard, continued the work; all three principal benefactors of the early work are recorded in heraldic masonry around the west door, with Ralph, Lord Cromwell having pride of place in the centre of the display.[239] They were not however the sole benefactors. There are more than fifty extant bequests for building the tower, more than for any other Norfolk church, mostly for the period between 1460 and 1480, though continuing until 1498 when Thomas Giles left 3s. 4d. to the church and tower.[240] The majority of these represent a period beginning soon after last of the three men recorded above the west door had died, suggesting that they had

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[237] The deed conveying the land survives in the Abbey Muniment Room: Cattermole, 2007, p.98.
[238] Cattermole, 2007, p.98.
[239] Cattermole, 2007, pp.98-99.
Sir John Clifton left £20 in his will towards the building of the tower, Lambeth Palace Library, Register Stafford 157, recorded in Cattermole and Cotton, 1983, p.275.
[240] Cattermole and Cotton, 1983, pp. 275,276.

not made provision for the funding of the building work to continue beyond their deaths.[241]

It is difficult to interpret these facts with confidence as recorded bequests probably only accounted for a small percentage of benefaction, but the documentary survivals seem to suggest that non-armigerous members of the parish community rallied round to complete a project begun with aristocratic funding. In any case, it is clear that the tower is not the result solely of aristocratic or gentry patronage, but was a collaborative, communal effort. This is consistent with a view that the tower was an expression of parochial pride and achievement, especially when set against the centuries-long competition that the town and parish had had with the priory.

The west tower at Wymondham, together with the circumstances of its construction, can be considered in the context of the local community that effected it and was affected by it. Its form was not merely dictated by the tastes and abilities of the masons who built it but by the people who desired to have it built, those who paid for it and those who lived within its shadow. Their choices were influenced by the physical, social and political environment in which they existed. By examining both the material forms of the sample group of towers and the circumstances of their construction insofar as the historical records allow these to be reconstructed, I contend that it is possible to shed light on the aspirations and priorities of the communities that were the human context for their construction.

It is notable that Wymondham tower was financed by different classes of patron, yet only those who had the wherewithal to pour substantial funds into the initial stages of the building campaign are actually commemorated in the fabric of the building. If the historical records did not reveal that a substantial number of humbler members of the parish community contributed to its construction we might be persuaded that the tower was the product of the generosity of three wealthy and armigerous gentlemen who exercised considerable power and influence in the community even if they were not resident in it. It is therefore necessary to consider the way in which heraldic emblems were used when carved

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[241] Ralph, Lord Cromwell died on 4th January 1456, Davis, N.(ed.), *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*, vol.2, Oxford, 2004, p.82.

on the faces of towers and to consider the variety of motives that these forms of expression may have had.

Examining the correlation between such towers and the wealth of the communities and individuals who built and used them should make it possible to illuminate some of the material concerns of the period: how wealth was displayed, how financial burdens were shared, and how communal funds were raised. It should also provide insights into the way that towers indicated or even represented community identity. In pursuing such lines of inquiry, one can test the extent to which a material object, such as a church tower, can be seen to be an indicator of the intangible emotions, such as pride or ambition, that must have motivated the material choices of the people who influenced the forms of buildings.

Costs and materials

To build a tower was a costly enterprise that placed a great burden on the local community. Far more raw material was needed than for any other part of a church. If one considers the ground plans of any church with a large tower built during the period, the difference in the thickness of the walls in the tower and the rest of the church is immediately evident. This becomes clearer if the interior of the walls is revealed by ruination. At North Walsham, for example, the tower walls at ground floor level are about six feet thick as against two feet thick for the aisle walls (Fig. 36). They were built at the base of one of Norfolk's mightiest towers, since reduced by successive falls in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, that was recorded as having stood at 147 feet, or about 45 metres, tall.[242] Even modest towers required substantial walls to support them. At Walberswick in Suffolk, the contract for the construction of the tower stipulated that the walls should be six feet thick. This clause seems to have referred to the footings, though the walls are nevertheless massive at nearly five feet across.[243] North Walsham is a large church, about 49 metres in length from the west end of the nave to the east end of the chancel, hardly longer than the tower was tall. In

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[242] Pevsner and Wilson, *Norfolk* 1, 2002, pp.622-624.

[243] Salzman, 1952, pp.499,500. The question of the clause referring to the footings is raised in Chitty, C., "Kessingland and Walberswick Church Towers," *Suffolk* Archaeology, vol. 25, 1950, p.169.

such cases, the quantity of building material needed to complete a tower would have been in the same order, if not greater than the whole of the rest of the church, especially when the amount of space occupied by windows in the nave, clerestorey and chancel in later medieval buildings is taken into account.

Fig. 36 North Walsham

This material was in most cases flint rubble, faced either with whole flint pebbles or random pieces of flint set in lime mortar, or flints knapped to provide a decorative surface.[244] In the former, the surface of the wall would have been rendered, as was the case at Salle, where some lime render of apparent ancient date still exists in patches on the north side of the tower; in the latter, the carefully exposed surfaces of the flint were left exposed, as at Blofield. Close observation of the original flint walling of towers reveals that there does not seem to have been any standard form for building up a high wall using flint rubble in the fifteenth century. Whereas in the eleventh and twelfth centuries most church walls were built with whole flint pebbles chosen for their size laid in tight courses, by the fifteenth century the method had become localised or even personalised, so that one wall looks dissimilar in its composition from the next, and even within the same wall various workmen used different methods producing heterogeneous results, even allowing for inconsistency in the size and shapes of flints and other material used.

These variations are most evident in the proportions of mortar and stone employed. If a wall had been built using shuttering, pieces of flint of varying shape and size were piled into the space between the wooden planks and set with the addition of wet lime mortar of a consistency that could settle when poured onto the rubble from above. It would also have settled against the planes of the shutters and set in a smooth surface so that when the timber was eventually removed the mortar was very evident as a major component of the whole. Such a technique can be seen in the tower at Salle.[245]

A different technique, using drier mortar and placing the flints on top of each other, ensuring verticality using a plumb line, is the most common to be found across Norfolk. The ratio of mortar to rubble, which frequently includes re-used masonry and latterly pieces of brick, varies widely, sometimes in the same wall. At Banningham, for example, different methods of construction are revealed in horizontal bands of varying height around the tower (Plate 4a). A section of flint and brick rubble quite tightly packed with small pieces and

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[244] See Chapter 4 Iconography, above, for a discussion of the implications of flint as a decorative material.
[245] These different methods of laying flint rubble and lime mortar walls were tested in the churchyard at Deopham under the supervision of Richard Hyde a local craftsman who specialises in the use of ancient building materials and techniques.

relatively little mortar sits below a larger section of flint rubble with larger, whole pebbles very irregularly positioned with a high proportion of mortar, which in turn gives way to a more carefully coursed section with closely laid flints of fairly even size using correspondingly far less mortar.[246] The first two sections cover about six feet, whereas the third is double that height. These figures are interesting as similar sections of two metres or six feet, or multiples thereof, are frequently found in tower walls of flint rubble construction throughout Norfolk. It seems likely that they correspond to building seasons, which were necessarily short at around six months in order to eliminate the risk of frost damage which could destroy a wall made with slow-setting lime mortar.

The contract for the building of Helmingham church tower in Suffolk would seem to corroborate the material evidence.[247]The tower was stipulated to be 6o feet tall (with the option to build higher) and it was to be completed in ten years. As has already been already seen, most late medieval towers in Norfolk took longer than ten years to complete. However, it is likely that the contractual clause in the agreement to build Helmingham tower at the rate of six feet per year was based on the physical constraints imposed by the nature of the materials that limited construction to this degree.

Building seasons have been traced in the fabric of 83 towers in the sample group, though extensive re-pointing has rendered many others almost impossible to analyse. It is difficult to be confident about the reasons for such clearly heterogeneous layers of construction within a wall, as the varying nature of the material – flint size and type, quantity of brick and other masonry rubble – available for each season's construction must have influenced the manner of building to a degree. Yet it also seems clear that different workmen were employed from year to year in building these walls. From this one may infer that the business of building the walls of a tower in the later Middle Ages was delegated or sub-contracted to local labourers rather than specialists, and they may have been engaged on a seasonal basis. This is not surprising given the relatively unskilled nature of the work and that there would have been people in almost any community with experience of laying flint rubble walls in an area

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[246] There is no documentation to help date the tower at Banningham, though in general conformation it is very similar to the nearby tower at Wood Dalling which was under construction in the third quarter of the fifteenth century.
[247] Salzman, 1952, pp.547-9.

where flint was the main building material. This was particularly true of the north and east of the county where the majority of surviving vernacular buildings of the fifteenth and sixteenth century are of flint rubble construction.[248] Even in the south of the county where timber framing and clay-lump construction were more common there is substantial evidence for the use of flint in vernacular building. Only in the far north-west of the county where there is a seam of ferruginous sandstone known as carstone, which was used throughout the period, or in the marshland on the Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire borders where brick was used as an external facing, was flint largely absent from the construction of towers. Carstone can be seen as the principal material in the towers at Dersingham (Plate 33) and Wiggenhall St Mary, for example, while brick is used in the tower at Walpole St Andrew.

Objections may be raised that the particular problems faced when building towers required a specialist team, and Blatchly and Northeast as well as Fawcett posit that there were master masons who were hired for their skill and experience in tower construction.[249] Even if this were the case, it does not preclude the use of local and non-specialised labour to do the work of flint walling, for which the material remains provide strong evidence.

Specialist masons would have been required to cut the stone for the windows, doors and other openings and to construct the arches and vaults above those openings, as well as the tower stair. This work would have been more expensive, as would the stone required. It is not clear from the two contracts that survive for the building of towers in East Anglia – Helmingham and Walberswick, both in Suffolk, but fundamentally of the same construction as most Norfolk towers of the period – how much this skilled work would have cost the commissioning patrons.[250] The contracts are both for labour rather than materials (which were to be provided by the patrons), but do not specify how that labour was to be divided, raising the prospect that the contracting masons operated as entrepreneurs who sub-contracted at least part of the work.

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[248] For a full account of flint and other building materials in East Anglia and their distribution and use see Hart, S., *Flint Architecture of East Anglia*, London, 2000; Harris, A.P., 'Building Stone in Norfolk' in Parsons, D. (ed.), *Stone: Quarrying and Building in England AD 43-1525*, Chichester, 1990, pp.207-216; Pevsner and Wilson, 2002, pp.20-29.
[249] See Fawcett, 1975, pp.244, 245; Blatchly and Northeast, 2005, p.11.
[250] Salzman, 1952, pp.499, 500; and pp.547-549 respectively.

This interpretation is supported by the known biographical details of one of the two masons who was party to the Walberswick contract of 1425. Richard Russell was a man of substance and political standing (Adam Powle was the other mason about whom nothing is known outside the contract). He had been M.P. for Dunwich in 1420 and would be again in 1427 as well as being bailiff in 1430-31 and 1440-41.[251] Both Harvey and Fawcett believe that his work can be traced in the style of other towers, particularly that of Kessingland in Suffolk. It seems very likely, given his progress in local society, that he was a man of business and that his dealings with the patrons of the tower at Walberswick would have been on that basis. So, while the contract stipulates that the masons are to be paid £2 for every yard of the tower built, we cannot know how that money was to be apportioned and how much was to be reserved as profit for Russell and Powle.

As has been noted, Norfolk has little indigenous stone suitable for building, beyond the carstone of the north-west of the county. While flint had been used for making quoins and relieving arches in previous centuries, it was not held to be adequate or desirable for that purpose by the end of the fourteenth century. Consequently, the builders of even the most modest of towers needed to use building stone imported from outside the county. From the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries limestone brought from Caen in Normandy had been used for some buildings, not only those more prestigious commissions of the new Norman lords and churchmen, but also lesser buildings, particularly in the south-east of the county in the valleys of the Yare and Waveney.[252] By the end of the thirteenth century though, almost all freestone used in Norfolk was taken from the limestone quarries that extend from Northamptonshire into Lincolnshire. This is conventionally referred to as Barnack stone, even if the consistency, quality and colour of the limestone varies to such an extent that it must be concluded that several quarries were used.[253]

In any case, it was imported at great expense, more as a result of the cost of the transportation than of the raw material. The transport of building stone

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[251] John Harvey constructed a biography of Russell in Harvey, 1984, p.262.

[252] See Harris, 1990, pp.214, 215.

[253] For a geological description of the limestones generally grouped together as Barnack stone, see Hudson, J.D. and Sutherland, D.S., 'The Geological Description and Identification of Building Stones: Examples from Northamptonshire', in Parsons, 1990, pp.16-32.

inflated the cost greatly, especially if it had to travel any distance by land rather than water. Research into medieval building accounts in the south-west of England reveals that a journey of only 10 miles by sea and land in 1469 more than tripled the cost of the stone at the quarry.[254] Although, the variables are too great to allow extrapolation of these figures to cases of transportation in East Anglia, it is evident that having to carry freestone, sometimes for up to a hundred miles from its quarry of origin, placed severe financial burdens on those who funded tower building campaigns. It helps to explain why the majority of towers built in Norfolk in the fifteenth century have relatively small quantities of new limestone used in their composition.

Wealth

It is evident then, that building a church tower demanded substantial funds, and an ambitious tower must have placed a great financial burden on the local community if it was required to pay for it. The length of time needed to finish many towers revealed by a study of the local will registers was more the result of financial than physical constraints, with even modest towers taking many decades to complete in some cases.[255] The number of unfinished towers also speaks clearly about this burden, as well as the level of ambition of those who commissioned the projects. Both great and modest towers are often incomplete, some lacking only a parapet, such as Wymondham, Cawston, St Andrew's in Norwich or Bradfield (Plate 15), whereas others like Stratton Strawless, Felmingham, Salhouse or Stalham (Plate 134) lack whole stages and were clearly started with the intention of being built taller than circumstances subsequently allowed.

It is thus not surprising to find that the geographical distribution of towers constructed from the late fourteenth to the early sixteenth century coincides quite

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[254] Pounds, N.J.G., 'Buildings, Building Stones and Building Accounts in South-West England' in Parsons, 1990, pp.228-237. This figure refers to stone quarried at Pentewan in Cornwall and used in the building of Bodmin church. The difficult nature of the terrain must therefore be taken into account.
Masschaele argues, using the transportation of foodstuffs as the measure, that transport costs in the Middle Ages are often exaggerated in Masschaele, J., 'Transport Costs in Medieval England', *Economic History Review*, XLVI, vol.2, 1993, pp.266-279.
[255] The case of South Acre, where bequests to the building campaign stretch from 1383 to 1528, has already been mentioned, but others such as Bradfield with bequests ranging from 1451 to 1514, or Ingham from 1456 to 1533, Cattermole and Cotton, 1983, pp. 240, 252.

closely with the wealthiest areas of Norfolk in that period. The explanations for the distribution of wealth in Norfolk are not the subject of my research and it is sufficient to note that the richest zones tend to be those with the greatest agricultural productivity and the highest land values, and usually supported the greatest density of population.[256] The greatest densities of new towers built in the late Middle Ages are to be found in the north-east of the county in a strip running from Cromer along the coast to the east and south to the Bure valley, along the middle Waveney valley in the south-east, south-west of Wymondham and north-east of Thetford in the south, and in a narrow strip east of Norwich between the wetlands of the Broads (Fig. 37). The two north-eastern hundreds of North Erpingham and Tunstead were the wealthiest areas of Norfolk in the early sixteenth century according to research carried out on the subsidy returns of the 1520s and the Military Survey of 1522.[257] The Earsham Hundred in the south of the county on the north bank of the Waveney was also found to be one of the richest parts of the county as was the Blofield Hundred to the east of Norwich. The Forehoe and Mitford Hundreds to the west of Norwich had similar distributions of wealth. The only parts of the county where tower building flourished that do not correspond to this distribution were the areas to the east and north-east of Thetford in the Shropham and Guiltcross Hundreds. There are two areas of high wealth that did not contain many late medieval towers: the north coast around Wells and Walsingham, and the Marshland south and west of King's Lynn. In the latter case, this is arguably due to the low density of population and parishes, together with the incidence of large churches some of which, like Walpole St Peter, had already built towers which must have been deemed sufficient. The area in the north corresponding approximately to the North Greenhoe Hundred is curious in that it does not conform to the generally observed pattern. Although it was one of the richest parts of the county in the late Middle Ages it contains few towers built after the third quarter of the fourteenth century. Some of the wealthiest parishes in Norfolk, such as Cley or South Creake, have grand late medieval churches attached to earlier and more modest

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[256] See Pound, J., 'Sixteenth Century Norfolk: Population and Wealth' in Ashwin, T. and Davison, A., *An Historical Atlas of Norfolk*, 2nd edition, Chichester, 2005, pp. 100-102.
[257] The results of this research and an explanation of the methodology are set out by John Pound in Pound, J., 'Distribution of Wealth in the Early Sixteenth Century' in Wade-Martins, P. (ed.), *An Historical Atlas of Norfolk*, 1st edition, Norwich, 1993, pp.96,97.

towers. It is important to reflect on these data for they highlight an important truth, that wealth was not a cause for the construction of ambitious towers or any other grand buildings. Wealth provided the means for individual or communal patrons to give material form to their ambitions and choices. It was merely a necessary condition for building a large or elaborate tower, not the determining factor. Whether a desire to express wealth or status was an important motive in the decision to build a tower is a question that will be considered later in this chapter, but the form of a tower was a result of the choices of the patrons and masons who were involved in the design process.
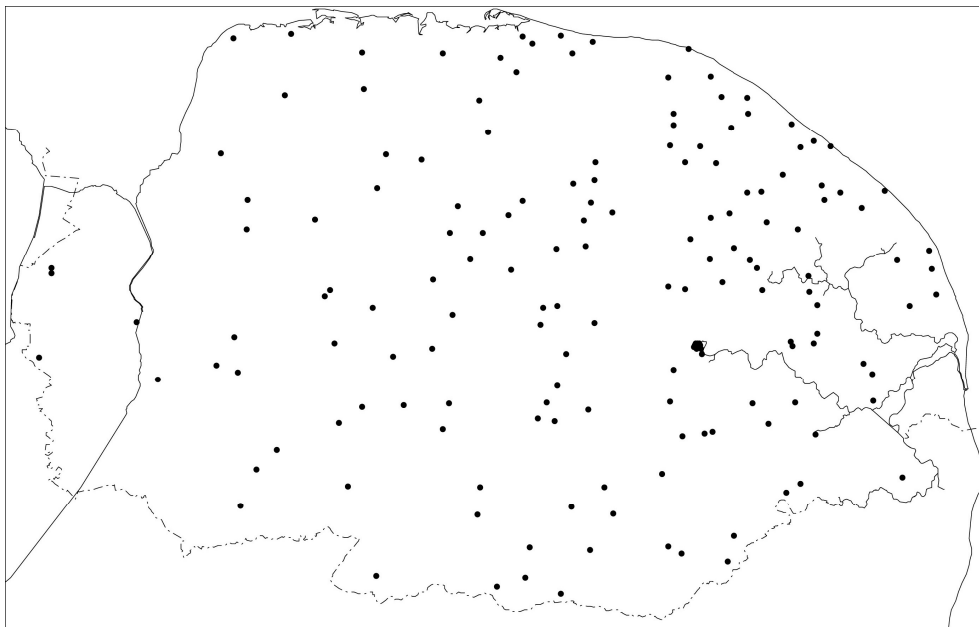

Fig. 37. Distribution of Norfolk Parish Church Towers, 1375-1540

Areas with a low density of tower construction in the period are, notably, those immediately to the north and south of Norwich, corresponding to the Taverham, Humbleyard and Henstead Hundreds, the heathland north of Thetford, and the area immediately to the east and north-east of King's Lynn in the north-west of the county. These correspond very closely to areas of low wealth distribution in the later medieval period, some because of their proximity to Norwich, and others as a result of poor soil quality and resulting low land values.

While great wealth may not have determined the building of new towers, relative poverty seems to have determined that towers were not built.

Conversely, considerable wealth in the community did not always manifest itself in the building of a grand tower. It is difficult to ascertain precisely the relative wealth of a parish in this period. The most complete valuations of parochial property and income for Norfolk in the Middle Ages are the Valuation of Norwich of 1254 and the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535.[258] The valuation of personal property for the Lay Subsidy of 1334, also largely complete for Norfolk, was organised in parish units and gives an insight into the material fortunes of those whose wealth did not transcend parish boundaries.[259] None of these valuations is an ideal tool for the accurate study of the wealth of parish communities in Norfolk as, while they are the most complete extant records of their type, they are far from comprehensive in their coverage. Neither is their scope of inquiry congruent with indices of total parish community funds, the Valuation of Norwich being concerned with the income deriving from the rights and properties of individual parish churches, the Lay Subsidy valuing individual personal wealth, and the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* measuring the value of assets held by parish churches and their rectories. Although these are imprecise indicators, they give a general and usually consistent idea about the relative wealth of parishes in Norfolk.

A correlation between parish wealth and tower height reveals that the grandest towers are to be found in parishes that feature in the top 10% of each of the medieval valuations.[260] (See Appendix 1) However, there is a significant number amongst the wealthiest parishes that did not build grand towers in the sample period. This may have been because, like Aylsham or Hingham, large towers had already been built at an earlier time and they were never replaced. At Cley and Dereham, two extremely wealthy communities, ambitious towers were

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[258] Lunt, W.E., (ed.), *The Valuation of Norwich*, Oxford, 1926; *Valor Ecclesiasticus temp. Henr. VIII auctoritate regia institutus: printed by command of His Majesty King George III in pursuance of an address of the House of Commons of Great Britain*, London, 1814-34.

[259] Glasscock, R., (ed.), *The Lay Subsidy of 1334*, London, 1975.

[260] Size has been taken as an index of grandeur in this correlation, towers of over 100 feet qualifying as grand. It would be desirable to include other elements of tower design in such an index, but the heterodox nature of the expression of ambition in the fabric of different towers and the necessarily very subjective nature of the choice of which factors to include have precluded this. This correlation is not intended to be a precise analysis of the relation of parish wealth and tower grandeur, but rather an illustration of a phenomenon that is readily observable to the researcher of the extant documentation in this area.

never built at the west ends of their large and elaborate churches. At the former, a very prosperous port, a great deal of new building had been carried out in the first half of the fourteenth century, resulting in one of Norfolk's most ambitious and opulent parish churches. It may be supposed that as this wave of construction took place before the period in which it was *de rigeur* to build a new tower, the impulse to add to the church fabric at a later age had already been exhausted. An alternative explanation for the lack of a new tower is that the fourteenth-century building campaigns extended the nave westward to the point where the land begins to fall away, thus rendering the laying of foundations more difficult. In the event, the small thirteenth-century tower was retained, standing at the west end of the present north aisle, the site of the original nave.

At Dereham, when it was decided that a new tower was needed to house a greater peel of bells after the central tower proved inadequate, a detached bell tower was built to the south-east of the church. It is probable that two of the considerations affecting this decision were that any western tower would have impinged on the site of the shrine of the first burial place of St Withburga that lies a few metres to the west of the church, and that this ground is swampy and unsuitable for bearing a heavy tower.[261] It is interesting that there is a great deal of testamentary evidence for donation to this tower from 1501, some of the bequests containing substantial gifts.[262] These bequests far exceed in number and in amount other gifts for the substantial works carried out on the church in the latter half of the fifteenth century, suggesting both the heavy financial demands of building a new tower as well as the communal nature of the funding effort.

Funding and Patronage

Evidence of benefaction provided by extant wills is useful in revealing the communal nature of the funding of new towers, but it can only paint a partial picture as there are very few surviving accounts detailing the other fundraising strategies that would have been necessary to raise the large sums required.

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[261] Similar considerations must have been behind the detached towers of the marshland towers in the west of the county. The early sixteenth century tower at Terrington St Clement, one of the richest parishes in late medieval Norfolk, which is entirely clad in ashlar and bears formal similarities to the tower at Swaffham, was built immediately to the north of the west end of the church, for example.

[262] Cattermole and Cotton, 1983, pp.244, 245.

Two interesting cases give a further insight into the nature and scale of fundraising, other than that from bequests, necessary to build a tower. At West Tofts, a modest tower in a humble parish in the heathland of south-west Norfolk provides evidence of fundraising in the inscriptions around its base course (Plate 150). At Swaffham (Plate 137), accounts incorporated into the benefactors' book, the so-called Black Book of Swaffham, reveal that lifetime gifts accounted for a far higher proportion of the funds than testamentary donations and sheds light on the quantities necessary to complete such a large project[263].

Swaffham

The tower of Swaffham church is one of only two late medieval towers in Norfolk faced entirely in freestone, the other being that at Cawston, although both Walpole St Peter and St Peter Mancroft in Norwich are largely clad in limestone. It is a large tower, just over one hundred feet high at the bottom of the parapet, with large angle buttresses that are sharply set back from the corners, enhancing the verticality of the structure. The plinth is decorated with a course of alternating trefoil-headed panels and wheel designs, some containing mouchettes, others blank shields and others with shields bearing the crossed swords of St Paul and the crossed keys of St Peter, the patrons of the church (Plate 137c). Where some of the freestone facing has come away revealing the flint underneath, it is possible to see that the cladding is no more than a few centimetres deep. There is a west door flanked by tabernacles with tall pedestals for standing images and there are also flanking water stoups. Their position, on the outside of the tower around the west door is very unusual and seems to indicate that the door was a daily entrance as well as a ceremonial one.[264] This is reinforced by the position of the church relative to the town with the west façade facing the exceptionally large market place about one hundred yards away. Immediately above the door is a five-light, sub-arcuated west window with a tracery design distinguished by shouldered ogee heads to each light. The window is set very deep in the fabric of

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[263] NRO Parish deposit 52/473 (transcript.)

[264] The settings of the stoups, niches and other minor architectural features on the lower west front are curious. There seems little coherence in the assembly of the elements, and close inspection reveals that the stoups are insertions that cut through the moulded drip course of the plinth. One must conclude that the arrangement of the elements around the door was subject to design revision after the initial building campaign was finished.

the tower, allowing a broad hollow chamfer frame in which, unusually, are set two further image niches. There is no sound hole above the window on the west face and the limestone surface is thus emphasised in a large unbroken expanse of masonry. The three-light belfry openings of different design to the west window are also deeply set. This treatment of the openings in the surface of the tower emphasises the thickness and depth of the structure and hence its solidity and opulence. The parapet, completed in the 1530s, has pierced battlements, as described in Chapter Three (Plate 137b).

It is therefore possible to detect three different design phases in the building, the first being represented by the door and west window, the second by the bell chamber openings, and the last by the parapet. However, the use of freestone throughout gives the building an appearance of aesthetic unity that is deceptive. What can clearly be seen at Swaffham, as in most other Norfolk towers, are different phases of design rather than a unified whole. This calls into question the notion of 'tower design'. The tower stands as one of the grandest building projects in late medieval Norfolk yet, interestingly, does not display any dynastic heraldry in its fabric.

The wealth of extant documentation reveals the breadth and character of benefaction in a more comprehensive way than for any other commission of the period. Alongside a number of wills, the 'Black Book,' started in 1454, details contributions made to building works carried out at the church, as well as the churchwardens' accounts.[265] The 'Black Book' reveals that substantial sums were gifted to the repair and renewal of the fabric of the church from the middle of the century. Early entries relating to work on the tower must refer to an earlier structure since, as Heslop points out, an entry written shortly after 1474 refers to money donated for the repair of the 'old steeple', indicating either that a new version was already in the planning or, less probably, had already been begun whilst the old one somehow still stood.[266] The benefactors, Richard and

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[265] For a summary of the extant documentation see Cattermole and Cotton, 1983, pp.266-268. The churchwardens' accounts and a full transcript of the "Black Book" are to be found in Norfolk Record Office, Parish Deposit 52/7 and 52/473 respectively. Both the "Black Book" and the churchwardens' accounts are discussed in Rix, W.B., *The Pride of Swaffham*, Swaffham, 1954, Williams, J.F., 'The Black Book of Swaffham', *Norfolk Archaeology* 33, 1965, pp.243-253, and Heslop, T.A., 'Swaffham Parish Church: Community Building in Fifteenth Century Norfolk' in Harper-Bill, C., (ed.), *Medieval East Anglia*, Woodbridge, 2005, pp.246-271.
[266] Heslop, 2005, p.260.

Catherine Crosse, clearly understood that the planning and building of a new tower was a lengthy process and that in the meantime the old tower would have to be kept serviceable.

The 'Black Book' records major donations to the tower building campaign that confirm that the project was underway in the 1470s. Most entries relating to work on the tower postdate Botwright's death in 1474.[267] John Chapman and his wife, as well as having the north aisle built, gave the very large sum of £120 to the tower. The similarity in the design of the window tracery of the north aisle windows and the west window, particularly that of the oculus and the shouldered ogees of the main lights, and in the way the sub-arcuation is handled, strongly suggest that the same mason was engaged on both projects. As the sole donors to the north aisle and the largest donors to the tower, the Chapmans are thus revealed as major contributors to the design process.

Other substantial gifts were made by John Walsingham, who gave £40 to the new church and steeple; Simon Blake gave more than £40; Robert Payne gave 20 tons of freestone to the steeple and 20 tons to edify it; Robert Coppyng, rector from 1474 to 1495, gave 20 marks; Robert Fuller, vicar from 1465 to 1488, gave £20; John and Catharine Payne gave 40 'chalders', or cauldrons, of lime for making mortar. There are about thirty further gifts of less than £10 recorded.[268]

Extant wills contain bequests that are generally much smaller than the donations recorded above. They are generally measured in shillings, although Robert Batman left £20 to build the battlement of the steeple in 1529, and Thomas Blake left 10 marks in 1506.[269] A number of inferences can be drawn from these figures. Firstly, that the amounts left in wills represent only a small fraction of the total funds used in the building of the tower. Secondly, it is clear that the larger sums were donated towards the beginning of the project and that smaller gifts made in wills often relate to the continuation and finishing of the project, as is revealed by the preponderance of bequests made after 1500. This would seem to indicate that the patrons of the tower building project were concerned to ensure a substantial fund had been assembled before the building

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[267] Heslop, 2005, p.260
[268] Cattermole and Cotton, 1983, p.267.
[269] Cattermole and Cotton, 1983, p.267.

started, in order to allow at least the first stage of construction to be completed with the security of adequate financial provision.

If this tendency towards sound financial planning can be extrapolated across the sample, it would correlate with a phenomenon seen in the fabric of many church towers. A significant break in the nature of the construction material below the sound hole, just above the meeting point of the gable of the nave and the east wall of the tower can often be observed. It is particularly evident at Blofield (Plate 14b) and Docking, for example. This is the point at which the west end of the nave would have been 'sealed' during the building of new towers and it must have been the intention of those in charge of construction to reach this level as soon as possible so that any temporary walling structure could be removed. It would have been desirable to have collected the necessary funds to reach at least this phase of the building before starting construction and leaving the nave open at its west end.

None of the benefactors who contributed funds to the building of the tower were aristocratic or even belonged to the gentry, hence the lack of heraldic emblems. Yet they were able to have one of the most impressive and ambitious of all the grand towers of Norfolk built. They decided at the beginning to have the entire building faced with ashlar, thereby greatly increasing the cost of the project. The motivation for this decision was surely an expression of pride, an assertion of their communal capacity to build a tower in a style that others in the county had seldom attempted. Heslop argues that the rebuilding of the tower in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries was conditioned by a communal expression of independence from aristocratic patronage, necessarily transient in a community where there had been so many changes of lordship over the century.[270] The tower at Swaffham is expressive of the solidity and growing confidence of a class of people below the gentry in the conventional social hierarchy but with increasing wealth and power. It is not only indicative of the strength of conventional piety amongst folk of the middling sort, but expresses pride in the prosperity and confidence of the community that united to build it.

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[270] Heslop, 2005, pp.261-270.

Salle and Cawston

The neighbouring towers at Salle (Plates 122, a, b, c) and Cawston (Plates 27, a, b) are similarly ambitious and as grand in scale as Swaffham.[271] Cawston is the only other late medieval Norfolk west tower faced entirely in ashlar, whilst Salle has a flint rubble surface that would have been rendered. Both have a strong emphasis on the ensemble of door and west window, and have tall bellchamber openings. They both have strong angle buttresses, those at Cawston set back as at Swaffham, emphasising the massiveness of each building. Consequently both dominate their surroundings and, importantly, can be seen from the other. The most fundamental difference that sets them apart from Swaffham in an analysis of patronage and community is that they both display a large number of heraldic emblems on their fabric.[272]

At Salle there is a frieze containing heraldic shields that runs immediately above the west door and below the window. At the left end there is a simple cross that may be that of St George, given the national and royal nature of some of the other heraldry. There follow two shields with heraldry of the Brews family, who were the patrons of the living of the church, and one with the Ufford arms – Eva, wife of Sir John Brews (*c*.1307-70) was the daughter of Robert Ufford, Earl of Suffolk. These are followed by another cross, which Parsons attributes to Mauteby, and then the crossed swords of St Paul and the arms of the Passion. Directly above the centre of the door is a wide, squat image niche that is not shaped to house a single standing figure. Duffy records that a will of 1528 tells that this housed an image of 'Our Lady of the West'. This may refer to a pieta, which would certainly fit the space of the niche and would be appropriate between two shields bearing arms of the Passion. To the right of the niche is the second shield bearing instruments of the Passion, then the cross keys of St Peter, the royal arms of England in a form post 1405, the arms of East Anglia, the royal arms with a label of three indicating the future Henry V as Prince of Wales, the

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[271] See Duffy, E., 'The Disenchantment of Space: Salle Church and the Reformation' in Tracy, J. and Ragnow, M., (eds.), *Religion and the Early Modern State*, Cambridge, 2004, pp.324-347; Parsons, W.L.E., *Salle: The Story of a Norfolk Parish*, Norwich, 1937; Fawcett, R. and King, D., 'Salle Church', and Baggs, A.P., 'Cawston Church', *The Archaeological Journal* 137, 1980, pp.332-335.

[272] There is very little documentary evidence of patronage of either tower. One will exists that contains a bequest to the tower at Cawston in 1421, Cattermole and Cotton, 1983, p.243.

arms of Lord Morley and finally those of Sir William de Kerdeston, whose manor lay partly within the parish and who married Cecilia Brews.[273] It is a display that mixes the arms of local gentry families with national and royal emblems and religious and devotional signs.

At Cawston, a heraldic display in exactly the same position contrasts greatly with that at Salle. Here the heraldic emblems refer solely to one family. The De La Poles were earls of Suffolk after the Uffords, soon to become dukes of Suffolk after the building of the tower, and lords of the manor of Cawston. There are nine shields above the door, two of which are blank. Each of the other seven bears the arms of a member of the De La Pole family, with the central shield bearing those of Michael, second Earl of Suffolk, who died at Harfleur in 1415. Michael must have been the principal benefactor at the beginning of the construction of the new tower, following the collapse of the old one in 1412, and the position of his arms at the centre of the display confirms that.[274] Surrounding the central shield are the arms of Michael's wife, his children, including those of the third earl, who survived him by only a few weeks to die at Agincourt, as well as those of his parents, who died a long time before the new tower was commissioned.

A comparison between the two sets of shields is revealing of very different attitudes to display. Cawston was an aristocratic project. Work on the tower was begun shortly after the collapse of the previous building, before Michael's death in 1415, without the need for a long financial planning stage as at Swaffham. This confident approach to the design and construction of the tower is reflected in the heraldic display above the west door, as well as in the eye-catching decision to build entirely in ashlar, something that had not been attempted for any other parish church in Norfolk at the time. The heraldry is unequivocal: this was a De La Pole project and an expression of the family's affluence, taste and power.

At Salle, on the other hand, a different class of benefactor is recorded. The Brewses, Mautebys and Kerdestons were local gentry families who each had interests in manors in the parish. The Morleys were aristocratic and also had

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[273] The heraldic display was interpreted in Parsons, 1937, pp.32,33. The arms of the future Henry V allow the beginning of the work on the tower to be dated to between 1405, when the new style royal arms were introduced, and 1413, when Henry acceded to the throne.

[274] Cattermole and Cotton, 1983, p.243.

manorial interests. Salle church is notable in being a more unified project than was usual. The mouldings of the plinth of the tower follow round the base of the nave aisles uninterrupted, indicating that the new nave, aisles and tower were planned and laid out at the same time. Heraldry, not only on the tower, but also in the glass of the aisles reveals that the building was a collaborative effort of a group of wealthy, local, gentry families.[275] This collaboration is expressed in the emblems on the west front of the tower, but in a more complex way than at Cawston. The juxtaposition with such devotional and characteristic late medieval images as the instruments of the passion and, possibly, a pieta, hints at a concern to be linked to religious orthodoxy at a time when Lollardy was being persecuted. The use of royal and national devices also suggests at a wish to be seen as loyal to a new regime at a moment when the political situation was still unstable shortly after the Lancastrian usurpation. At a time when heresy was equated with sedition, it would have seemed politic for a class of people on the rise, such as the Salle gentry, to be seen to be 'onside' and not to rock the boat. The heraldic display above the door strongly displays the orthodox credentials of those involved in building the tower and new nave.

Both sets of heraldry include the arms of people who died long before the building works were started. At Salle, Sir John Brews and his wife Eva, together with Sir William de Kerdeston are recorded, and at Cawston the arms of Michael, the first earl of Suffolk, and his wife Katherine Wingfield, are displayed. As these emblems cannot be intended to record benefaction, their primary function must be to commemorate. Commemoration, as is seen in the cases of West Tofts and North Lopham below, was a powerful motive for benefaction in the late Middle Ages, and clearly it was important for benefactors to commemorate those whose souls had already passed into purgatory and were in need of the prayers of the living.

As has been noted above, the building of towers was a powerful vehicle for the expression of communal or personal pride. When two such grand towers as Salle and Cawston were being built so close to each other at the same time – it is known that the former was begun between 1405 and 1413, and the latter between 1412 and 1415 – could this pride spill over into competition? The

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[275] See Fawcett and King, 1980, for a summary of the heraldry displayed in the glass at Salle.

different classes of benefactor at work in each case, the rising gentry at Salle and the new aristocracy at Cawston, seem to mirror the social tensions that existed in English society after the Black Death. If it is fanciful to attribute much of the resulting fabric of the towers to these underlying factors, there is little doubt that the communities of each parish must have been very aware of the great buildings rising in opposition to each other across the fields. Might not the reference to Ufford in the heraldry at Salle be, in part, a challenge to the De La Poles at Cawston? Whether any *campanilismo* had a direct effect on the design of the buildings must remain speculation, but it is interesting to note that where both building campaigns remained unfinished decades after they were commenced, only Salle was finally completed. Evorard Brigg provided funds for completing the tower in 1511 and is recorded in heraldry on the parapet. It seems that it was important for Salle to be completed , whereas when the De La Pole money ran out at Cawston, no benefactor could be found to finish a project that had been so closely associated with one aristocratic family, rather than the community as a whole. It is also likely that when the parishioners of Swaffham opted for an ashlar-faced tower it was a deliberate decision to compete with Cawston. Until the early 1450s Swaffham had been subject to exploitation of the De La Pole faction, first by the earl, then by his associate Thomas Tuddenham. In designing and, importantly, completing a freestone faced tower, the community at Swaffham demonstrated that it could outperform a wealthy, and resented, aristocrat.[276]

<u>Commemoration</u>

<u>West Tofts and North Lopham</u>

The possibility of the achievement of salvation through the working off of penitential tariffs after death through the intercession of the living while the soul remained in purgatory was a source of great comfort to men and women in the later Middle Ages, as well as being a great impetus to benefaction. The giving of gifts to the fabric of the church would in itself have been considered a good work that lightened the penitential burden, much as leaving vestments, or funds for

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[276] For a further discussion of the political and social implications of the building of Swaffham tower see Heslop, 2005.

lights would have been. However, such charitable giving would often have been accompanied by a desire for commemoration on the part of the benefactor and it is here that the problems with such large-scale communal patronage as the building of a tower are revealed.

W. K. Jordan collated and analysed charitable benefaction in the late Middle Ages and early modern period throughout the county of Norfolk.[277] He estimated that two- thirds of the sums he recorded were represented by bequests and the remainder made up of gifts made during lifetimes archived in a variety of extant sources such as churchwardens' accounts and endowment instruments. These figures must be considered in the knowledge of the perils of placing too much stress on data recovered from wills, as has been noted earlier. His analysis revealed that the total recorded in extant documentation as being given to building and repairing church fabric between 1480 and 1540, £11,900, was slightly higher than that left to funding perpetual chantries and other provision for prayers for the dead, £10, 934 6s. Taken together they account for the great majority of all funds left to charitable purposes in the period, £26,375. Given that the laity was exhorted to charitable giving as a means for the salvation of the soul after death, and clearly responded to those exhortations, what is to be made of this high figure for donation to the fabric of the 600 or so parish churches in the county, much of which is accounted for by the building of ambitious church towers? Patronage of church fabric and furnishings provided an opportunity for benefactors to be commemorated with an inscription on the object that they had endowed, thereby encouraging prayers for their soul after they had died from those who were reminded of them. This type of commemoration can occasionally be seen around the bases of fonts, such as those at Salle or Walsoken, or on roodscreens, as at Ludham. More rarely, commemorative inscriptions are to be found on church fabric as will be seen in the cases of West Tofts and North Lopham. However, Norfolk towers do not, on the whole, bear explicit imprecations to remembrance, although heraldic devices must have had a commemorative function, as has been seen in the cases of Salle and Cawston. Of 164 towers, thirty-two have some form of dynastic heraldry that allows identification of at least one benefactor, though in twelve instances non-

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[277] Jordan, W.K., *The Charities of Rural England, 1480-1660*, London, 1961, pp.257-270

armigerous benefactors are recorded in the fabric, usually through inscription of their initials. Furthermore, in only five instances yet identified are explicit imprecations to remember the dead or to pray for their souls recorded. These examples are to be found in a group in the south-west of the county on the Suffolk border near Thetford and Diss. At West Tofts, for example, the names of a group of benefactors are recorded in flint flushwork panels around the plinth course of the tower on the west and south sides.

At West Tofts the tower can be dated securely to the last quarter of the fifteenth and first quarter of the sixteenth century by extant testamentary bequests, although it must have been started earlier. The bequests were made by parishioners who were known to have been working on raising funds for the building of the tower during their lifetimes. The tower is modest in scale and design, about sixty feet tall, without a west door and with a simple two-light west window (Plate 150). The angle buttresses extend to midway up the belfry stage and display some flushwork panelling on their outer faces. There is a crenellated parapet with crocketted pinnacles. The only surface articulation other than two string courses is found on the plinth in the form of the series of inscribed panels referred to above (Plate 150a). Reading the individual panels on the west side of the tower the first two record 'All the begyners of the werke'. Interestingly, the upper part of the first panel has been effaced. This must have contained writing offensive to a later age and it is not unreasonable to suppose that it read Pray For, and was probably removed by Clement Gilley, William Dowsing's deputy in this part of Norfolk, as Blatchly and Northeast contend.[278] After these panels come the names of the benefactors: Andrew Hauke, John Rolff (with a shepherd's crook crossing the R to indicate his livelihood), John Olyver and Amy his wife, Wyllya' Oliver, Willia' Rolff, John Rolff, John Hewke and Robert Rolff on the south west buttress. Higher on this buttress, above two chalices represented in flushwork, is S' John Vyse p[ar]so[n]. Vyse served as rector of West Tofts between 1451 and 1486, Andrew Hewke left £3 to the tower in 1484, John Oliver left 3s. 4d. to the bells in 1482; William Oliver 6s 8d to the steeple in 1518 and William Rolff 40s in 1511. A bequest of a ton of freestone to 'byldyng of the batylement' in 1518 by John Kechyn, who is not commemorated in the fabric,

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[278] Blatchly and Northeast, 2005,

shows that the tower was being completed then, at least 34 years after it was started.[279]

It is intriguing that these benefactors have themselves recorded as the beginners of the work, yet their only known donations are made in their wills proved over a period of more than three decades. This seems to indicate that they all also gave gifts during their lifetimes that are not recorded in extant documentation that were enough to instigate the building project. At any rate it is clear that such a major work would have required a critical quantity of funds either given or pledged before it could start, certainly greater than that indicated in the respective wills of these people. It is not known if they were the churchwardens at the beginning of the project, but their inscriptions raise the possibility that they were not only donors, but also fundraisers. The parallels with the funding of the tower at Swaffham are clear and although there is no surviving documentation to record donations made during lifetimes, the inference to be drawn from the inscriptions is that these beginners of the work were performing the same role as those wealthy parishioners at Swaffham who were concerned to set the building project on a sound financial footing from the start.

The south plinth has another series of panels, some damaged but not unreadable, which, importantly, asked *Jesus, Mary, Ora Pro NoBis*. This was the classic formula of appealing to intercession on behalf of the souls of the deceased. As a commemorative scheme it is clear and effective and yet this type was restricted to a comparatively small geographical area in this part of Norfolk and Suffolk in the last decades before the Reformation. A very similar scheme can be seen a few miles away in Thetford Forest at Santon Downham, just a few yards over the border in Suffolk, which may have served as the model for West Tofts as it was finished in the last decade of the fifteenth century. At Santon Downham, William Toller is commemorated in a flushwork panel in the plinth course frieze, very much as the benefactors at West Tofts are commemorated.

About ten miles to the south-east at North Lopham, a number of benefactors are commemorated in a different though intriguing way. Again the tower is not grand, standing at about fifty-eight feet tall, and appears unfinished in that it does not have a true parapet, but a low band of crenellated masonry that

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[279] Cattermole and Cotton, 1983, p.270.

sits directly on top of the belfry stage (Plate 96). However, it shows more
ambition than that at West Tofts, with a west door below a simple two-light west
window. As is often the case in the south-west of the county, more attention was
paid by the designers to surface decoration than to large scale architectural
ambition. The plinth is decorated with a frieze of flushwork trefoil panels on the
west face and with carved mouchette panels alternating with crowned initials
including a Marian monogram. This iconographic programme is carried up the
lower faces of the buttresses. The most interesting and unusual feature though, is
the series of inscriptions on the south face of the tower (Plate 96a). The positions
of these commemorative inscriptions seem to represent the moment at which the
benefactions which they record were made. The commemorative panels extend
in a vertical sequence up the south face of the tower, starting with a long
inscription at the level of the first string course that has long resisted
interpretation. *Orate pro animabus* is relatively straightforward, yet the next
letters which are IO and then B followed by what have traditionally been held to
be K A L L I and commemorative of John Kailli, have recently been interpreted,
correctly I think, as being John Barker and Alice, his wife.[280] This depends on
the K being read as an exaggerated ampersand. This interpretation is supported
by the 1486 will of John Barker of South Lopham whose wife was indeed Alice.
In the will he left 5 marks to the new tower at North Lopham.

About 8 feet further up the tower there begins a series of small panels
bearing initials, the first being RB which may stand for Robert Bolle. Then there
is an unidentified MB, followed by an IB which may refer once again to John
Barker, or possibly his nephew, also John Barker. Then, after a short gap is WA
which probably commemorates William Alleyn, who left 9s 3d to the tower in
1500 and a few feet above that is an isolated inscription bearing the letters PV
RD, which I believe stand for Richard Darby, who was rector from 1462 until his
death in 1507.[281] After another interval there is a final panel which has doggedly
defied interpretation. If these identifications are correct then a chronological
order recording benefaction was established, with a commemoration from 1486
corresponding to the lowest inscription, with one of 1500 being in the middle,
and further up the tower, but at a lesser interval, a commemorative panel from

[280] See Blatchly and Northeast, 2005, p.27
[281] See Cattermole and Cotton, 1983, p.254; and Blatchly and Northeast, 2005,

1507. Close inspection also reveals that the inscribed panels also correspond to changes in the building fabric that probably represent breaks in the building campaign.

A number of conclusions may be drawn from examining the evidence of these towers in the south-west of the county. Firstly, at West Tofts, there is evidence of concerted communal fund-raising in the notion of a group of parishioners being the beginners of the work. This is consistent with what is known from research into parochial fund-raising in the work of Eamon Duffy, Katherine French and Beat Kumin.[282] Secondly, giving to the material fabric of the church building was considered an efficacious means of working off the penitential burden and so easing the soul through purgatory. This concern is revealed in a number of wills, too. For example, in 1535 Thomas Berys left 20s. to Felmingham 'steple for me and my fryndes to be prayed for'.[283] However, this concern is very rarely explicitly expressed in the fabric of a tower. It may be supposed that one explanation for this is that of all the parts of a church, its ornaments, furniture, plate and candles, a tower is the least easily appropriated by a single person of narrow group of people.

The costs involved in construction and the length of the building campaign meant that a tower was above all a communal project, even when aristocratic donation was involved. It is my contention that towers could be aids to commemoration, but as records of communal giving. Aided by the recitation of the Bede Roll at mass, all members of a parish community would have been reminded of the deceased that had contributed to the building of what was in many cases the greatest single building project in living memory.

Through this research parish church towers are revealed as evidence of the community competence of late medieval Norfolk. They are indicative of the taste and pride of their benefactors and wider community, as well as of piety. At times of turbulence in national administration, people at large showed that at the parish

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[282] See Duffy, E., 2005, pp131-154; French, K., 'Parochial Fund Raising in Late Medieval Somerset' in French, K., Gibbs, G., and Kumin, B., (eds.), *The Parish in English Life, 1400-1600*, Manchester, 1997, pp.115-132.
[283] 1535 Thomas Berys, NCC Atmere 312.

level common interest triumphed where larger scale dysfunctionality was prevalent.

Chapter 6.

Conclusion

My examination of parish church towers built in Norfolk in the later Middle
Ages, their material forms and historical context, has led to several lines of
investigation that shed light on questions of style, iconography and community
ambition and organisation. Each of these avenues of enquiry is underpinned by
the paradigmatic hypothesis that a study of architectural forms, and by extension
other material objects, can illuminate such intangible notions as the ideologies
and ambitions of the people who commissioned and built them, and of those who
viewed and lived with them. This approach was driven by the desire to engage
with the objects under scrutiny in their sociological, historical and theological
context. This integrated approach, as advocated by Sauerlander, regards the
towers as a phenomenon of late medieval and regional building techniques and
styles, of parish, village, feudal and urban relations and of contemporary
liturgical and economic ideologies.[284] It was born of a need to view minor-church
architecture in something other than the narrow taxonomic framework in which it
had hitherto largely been located.[285]

At first, a comparative analysis of the material forms of 156 parish church
towers was undertaken. All towers built at the west ends of the nave on the main
axis of the church whose construction could be confidently dated to between
1375 and 1540 were included in the sample. The analysis revealed both
innovation in the adoption of general visual effect and design details, alongside
persistence in the use of older forms. This heterogeneity of approach to design in
the sample was broadly made up of two more homogenous groups. There is a
group of towers that shows little innovation in their design; they were built
without doors, elaborate openings or much surface articulation. A tower such as
Guist, built in the early fourteenth century shares many of the characteristics that

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[284] For an integrated approach to architectural history see Sauerlander, 1995, pp 3-18, as outlined
in Chapter 1, pp 7, 8 above.
[285] See Bond, 1905; Tyrrell Green, 1908; Allen, 1932, for the principal classifications of later
medieval church towers in England. Fawcett, 1975, pp 254-303, also has a taxonomic analysis of
a small group of parish towers in Norfolk with the goal of establishing attribution.

can still be seen in Santon Downham, from the early sixteenth century, for instance. Only the flushwork on the plinth of the latter tower and the tracery in the simple two light openings indicate a later date.

Similarly, those towers whose designers chose to adopt new or modern forms express consistent traits: an emphasis on the west door and window, a profile articulated by strongly stepped buttresses, large areas of blank wall masonry punctuated with large openings and horizontal string courses, and bold though simple crenellated parapets. Within this group of towers there is a great variety of design details: arch forms, moulding profiles, window tracery, and so on. There are further sub-groups of towers that share many such similar design details. An examination of these cognate groups contributes to the debate on the transmission of architectural style and also raises questions about the validity of attributing buildings to designers or master masons on the basis of design and style alone.

The formal analysis revealed certain general trends amongst the sample group of towers. The most striking of these is the emphasis that tower designers came to place on the west door and its integration with the west window and the framing of the zone around the two elements. This had the effect of exalting the ideas of towers as entrances and facades, notions that had hitherto been unrealised in parish church towers in the county. Beyond the aesthetics, it is legitimate to seek an iconological interpretation of the forms, motifs and emblems that patrons and designers employed in realising such effects. An application of knowledge of contemporary theological and liturgical ideologies and practices has been necessary in trying to understand the impact and connotations that certain repeated forms and emblems must have had on observers of the towers in the later Middle Ages. It has been important to establish the nature of the common ideological parameters within which patrons, designers and observers of the period would have responded. Having done so, it has been possible to shed light on the design choices that were manifest in the broadly homogenous aesthetic approach of the large group of towers that exhibited innovation in their main architectural features.

Furthermore, it has provided an explanation of the new approach in the use of materials, particularly in the realisation of the expressive qualities of knapped flints. The use of flint as a brilliant surface material rather than merely

as a readily available and comparatively cheap construction material is one of the features that characterises the ecclesiastical architecture of Norfolk from the middle of the fourteenth century. It is seen to its greatest effect around the doors and base courses, and on the buttresses and parapets of the majority of towers from the sample group, but also on the new porches and clerestories that were the other main objects of benefaction in the period. This new approach to the manipulation of flint as a building material encouraged the observer to make a connection between the building they were viewing with such descriptions of idealised architecture as that in Chapter 22 of the Book of Revelation, one of the best known descriptive passages in the Bible in the late Middle Ages. Thus, I believe, an iconological analysis can be applied not merely to the formal qualities of medieval architecture, but also to its sensory effects.

Although little documentation exists to attest to the full costs of building a large tower in the late Middle Ages in Norfolk, it has been possible to shed light on the effort, commitment and financial burden taken on by the communities that decided to embark on such large scale projects. Analysis of heraldic display on individual towers enabled conclusions to be drawn about the different types of patronage and the scale of ambition of different groups within the social hierarchy of the period. Taken together with historical and antiquarian sources, a picture of how different communities contributed to the undertaking of such large local projects emerged. The organisation and commitment required by a wide section of local society to undertake a tower building campaign speaks clearly of the importance of the parish as a social unit at a time when people's identities and loyalties were owed to an overlapping network of social groupings that included the village or town, and the manor, as well as the parish.[286]

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[286] There are numerous accounts of the social and economic organisation of late medieval society with different interpretations arrived at through the application of different theoretical models, see, in particular, Keen, M., *English Society in the Later Middle Ages 1348-1500*, Harmondsworth, 1990; Horrox, R. and Ormrod, W.M., (eds.) *A Social History of England 1200-1500*, Cambridge, 2006; Bolton, J.L., *The Medieval English Economy 1150-1500*, London, 1980; Postan, M.M., *The Medieval Economy and Society*, Harmondsworth, 1975; Dyer, C., *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages*, Cambridge, 1989; Bridbury, A.R., *The English Economy from Bede to the Reformation*, Woodbridge, 1992; Rigby, S.H., *English Society in the Later Middle Ages: Class, Status and Gender*, Basingstoke, 1995.

<u>Style</u>

Questions of architectural style in the later Middle Ages are usually addressed in the context of the architecture of major, usually ecclesiastical, buildings. By examining the material forms of a broad sample of lesser buildings and the aesthetic approaches and choices of those who built them, it has been possible to reach conclusions about the validity of prevailing notions of style and style classification when applied to parochial building. A descriptive analysis of the general forms of the towers as defined by their size and relative dimensions, their profiles resulting from buttress and parapet design, as well as individual architectural features such as window and window tracery design and the moulding profiles of door frames and drip moulds revealed a heterogeneity that is at odds with the taxonomies of late medieval English architecture still prevalent in the historiography of the subject.

While many of the west towers of Norfolk parish churches of the late Middle Ages, and those in East Anglia generally, are amongst the most ambitious to be found in England, they possess many different general characteristics from towers of similar importance to be found in other parts of the country. The towers of Somerset, those that have attracted most previous scholarly attention, together with those of Devon, the Cotswolds, and of Lincolnshire and the Vale of York, have distinct formal characteristics that clearly separate them from Norfolk towers. Chief amongst these are the treatment of surface articulation and, most importantly for the observer, the general profile of the tower as a function of buttressing, parapets and proportions.

Most of the grander towers of those regions have extensive blind panelling across much of their walls. As this is often not confined to the west face of the tower, but carried around all four sides, there is less sense for the observer of the importance of the western facade than in Norfolk towers. The extensive use of flint and the expense of freestone explain the lack of detailed panelling and other surface articulation up to a point, although the designers in Norfolk seem to have made a virtue out of a necessity. It is instructive that the one tower where such articulation is present, St Peter Mancroft in Norwich, was clearly designed to create a very different effect from other towers in the county. The panelling, repeated courses of blank shields and plethora of image niches

carved from freestone on the surface, together with the unusual arrangement of the openings at the base of the tower and the absence of an intermediate stage between the west window and the bell chamber openings distinguish the tower very dramatically from others in the city, just as its position, commanding high ground above the market place does. In designing a tower with an extensively articulated surface in order to emphasise difference, the builders of St Peter Mancroft inadvertently underlined one of the most conspicuous tendencies of other Norfolk towers.

Late medieval Norfolk towers can be seen as a relatively homogeneous group when considered in the wider context of towers of similar date in other parts of the country, but when considered closely and compared one with another, the differences in their formal details are as striking as the similarities. Chapter 3 set out the variety of application of the different architectural elements of these towers: buttresses, window shapes and tracery patterns, portal types and moulding profiles, parapets and pinnacles, and plinth courses, together with the differences in relative dimensions which affect the general profiles of the buildings. The aim of the survey was not strictly taxonomic and reflected the heterogeneity of the sample as much as the homogeneous elements. Previous surveys have tended to concentrate on style classification and towers were selected on the basis of comparability, as was the case with Allen's and Tyrell Green's works, or with the goal of establishing attribution, as in Fawcett's thesis, which relied on the detailed comparison of very similar individual architectural elements such as moulding profiles.[287] The only study of a large sample of towers in England with a substantially different aim is Stocker and Everson's inquiry into the Post-Conquest towers of the Diocese of Lincoln, which examined the iconography of the buildings, although one of the defining characteristics of the group of towers chosen in this study is its homogeneity.[288]

As my research valued difference as highly as similarity, wider ranges of cultural phenomena could be studied and conclusions reached. The relationship between formal style and chronology was examined. The formal choices available to designers and patrons were made explicit. As a result, the patron was

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[287] Tyrell Green, E., 1908; Allen, F., 1932; Fawcett, R., 1975, ch.5.
[288] Stocker, D. and Everson, P., *Summoning St Michael: Early Romanesque Towers in Lincolnshire*, Oxford, 2006.

brought into the design process where previously, if this had been considered at all, the focus tended to fall squarely on the master mason's role.[289] The effect on the contemporary observer made by the form of a tower was considered. Reception as an important cultural phenomenon had hitherto been largely overshadowed by the business of production in most accounts of late medieval minor ecclesiastical architecture in England. So, this broader approach to form and style has proved to be fruitful, and has allowed illumination of cultural dynamics that stricter taxonomic approaches would forego.

Different attitudes to innovation among tower designers and the different pace at which new forms were adopted and copied makes a strict relationship between formal style and chronology impossible to establish in the sample group. The earliest existing tower that manifests many of the elements that characterise the innovative towers of the late Middle Ages in Norfolk is at Hingham, built around the central decades of the fourteenth century.[290] It is important to emphasise that those elements: greater size, a western entrance with a deeply moulded frame, large buttresses that extend to the parapet, a decorated base course, and large and elaborate west window and bell chamber openings, all appear together in this innovative building. There appears not to be a gradual adoption of new elements in the design of Norfolk towers in the fourteenth century, but rather that a design which is recognisably typical of a type of later medieval tower in the county appeared at Hingham almost fully-formed. Some of the individual details of the tower, such as the use of reticulated and curvilinear tracery in the various openings, distinguish it from the majority of towers in the sample group. The main difference in aesthetic approach from many later towers, however, is the lack of integration in the design of the main elements of the west front. This aside, Hingham is recognisably characteristic of the more ambitious towers that were to be built in Norfolk over the next 180 years. It is impossible to know if Hingham provided a direct model for subsequent tower designers or was an expression of new design ideas and aesthetic trends that were current in the mid-fourteenth century that would have been inspirational in any case. It is

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[289] See, in particular, Harvey, J., 1954, which set the agenda for much of the debate on the design and attribution of late medieval architecture in England in the following decades.
[290] Blomefield, 1805, vol.2, pp 442-445. Blomefield records that the church was a rare Norfolk example of an integrated design, including the tower, having largely been the work of the Rector, Remigius of Hethersett with the support of his patron Sir John Marshall. He was Rector from 1316 to 1359.

interesting that the next patrons and designers to choose a similar aesthetic approach, expressed at churches such as Worstead, Walpole St Peter and St Giles, Norwich, built similarly ambitious towers in the late fourteenth century. Similar trends were seen on more modest towers only at a slightly later date. Nevertheless, it would seem unsound to try and trace a linear path of development in design, seeing Hingham as a starting point, resulting in a teleological approach that ignores the inherent variety in available choices expressed in the heterogeneity of the sample group.

As noted above, new material forms and a new approach to tower construction were adopted by designers of a few large and ambitious towers in the second half of the fourteenth century. Other new towers of the period, such as Brumstead and Great Witchingham, have some of the features of these large towers, most notably west doors, while retaining many of the elements of older buildings, such as proportionately small windows and bell chamber openings and unbuttressed upper stages. It seems, therefore, that innovation in tower design in the second half of the fourteenth century in Norfolk, was confined to a few, grand towers and that some elements of new design were replicated on a few more modest towers. However, it is not until the fifteenth century that the majority of creators of new towers chose to adopt entirely innovative approaches, as the fashion for towers that also functioned as grand facades and portals became widespread.

During the fifteenth century, as has been set out in Chapter 3, most new towers expressed greater ostentation in relation to the churches of which they were now integral parts than had hitherto been the case. It seems that both the desire to build a new tower and to build it according to a more expensive and discriminating taste was very widespread during the fifteenth century. However, it is difficult to ascertain exactly how many towers were built without such ambition and whose designers did not choose to adopt any of the newer architectural elements. The well-established general forms of the older type of tower had changed little over the course of more than two hundred years from the end of the thirteenth century. So, if there is no documentary evidence to indicate date and if later windows have been inserted, it is surprisingly difficult to distinguish an early fourteenth-century tower from a late fifteenth-century example that lacks any innovation in its design. The tower at Braydeston, for

example, which can be securely dated to the mid-fifteenth century by bequests and which has a west window and bell chamber openings with segmented arches and tracery with mullions and supermullions that were common for the period, is very similar in general form and aesthetic vision to that at Marsham, which was probably built in the early fourteenth century.[291]

The persistence of such a well-established tower type alongside tower designs with newer and more ambitious forms underlines the inadequacy of taking a strictly taxonomic approach to such a survey. Furthermore, within the group of more ambitious and innovative towers, a great variety of decisions about individual architectural elements is discernible. No two late medieval towers in Norfolk are identical in design. This raises interesting questions about the design process and the roles of the benefactors and master masons or architects in it. In the south of the county the heterogeneity of the sample is more marked than in the north and east, so when two very similar towers are located within a few miles of each other, as is the case at Bressingham (Plate 18) and Pulham Market (Plate 113, a), deductions about the commissioning and planning of each tower can be made. Richard Fawcett has argued convincingly that both towers are the work of the same mason or architect, largely on the basis of the moulding profiles of the west door and of the base course, together with the designs of the west windows and bellchamber openings and their tracery patterns.[292] The consistency of the execution of these designs supports his hypothesis. The differences in design are minor: the most notable being that at Bressingham the diagonal buttresses do not extend to the parapet as they do at Pulham Market, but terminate at the bottom of the bell chamber, and there is no intermediate string course at the former. The relationship of the door and west window is slightly different in each case and the image niches that flank the west windows are placed lower at Pulham Market and are of differing designs. Nevertheless, the similarities far outweigh the differences and it is easy to deduce

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[291] Braydeston is dated by a series of wills in the NRO: 1440, John Berney, NCC Doke 126; 1453, John Spreggy, NCC Aleyn 203; 1456, Benedict Lawys, NCC Brosyard 26; 1460, Thomas Wysemay, NCC Brosyard 213. Marsham can be tentatively dated to the first half of the fourteenth century on the basis of window tracery, and the fact that it was it was clearly built before the south aisle, which can also be dated according to the moulding of the nave arcade to the first half or middle of the fourteenth century.
[292] Fawcett, R., 1975, pp.254-267. Fawcett identifies work by the same mason in the lower stages of Earl Stonham tower a few miles across the border in Suffolk.

that the patrons of one tower were impressed by the other and chose to hire the same master mason in order to achieve a very near likeness. It is not known which tower was started first, though documentary and heraldic evidence point to the building campaign being under way at Bressingham in the 1430s.[293] As both towers are so similar at every stage of the design, it must be concluded that they were completed without interruption to the original designs, and it is very probable that they were both under construction at the same period in the middle of the fifteenth-century. It may also be the case that the differences in the designs were the result of patronal influence, either to accommodate a different budget or different tastes, although they may reflect the desire of the mason to improve on his earlier work.

It is known from the contracts for building the towers at Helmingham and Walberswick in Suffolk that patrons instructed their masons to copy certain features of other towers.[294] In north and east Norfolk there are a number of grand towers that share distinct formal similarities and a unity of aesthetic approach. The designers of each of these towers, if not the same people, were clearly very aware of the material forms of other towers of the same type. Fakenham, Southrepps, Foulsham, Brisley, Ingham, Blofield, Blakeney and Heydon are cognate inasmuch as the similarities in certain of their individual architectural elements and, in most cases, their general forms and profiles are close enough to infer direct transmission of design ideas between them. In each tower great emphasis is placed on the grandeur of the west façade and portal and all except Blakeney and Heydon have the striking motif of the arch of the very large west window extending to the ground, thus framing the door and its surrounding decorated area. However, it is evident from the differences in the design details of each tower and the nature of execution of the masonry, that these buildings were not planned and constructed by the same craftsmen, but were entrusted to different masons. The patrons decided that while they wished to imitate the designs of other admired, local buildings it was not necessary or practical to employ their designers to achieve the desired result.

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[293] The shield in the right hand spandrel of the west door indicates the patronage of Sir John Pilkington, who held the estate between 1436 and 1447. A bequest of 6s.8d. was made to the tower in 1431, John Coppyng, NCC Surflete 70.

[294] Salzman, 1952, pp. 547-9 for Helmingham, and pp. 499-500, for Walberswick. For a discussion of these contracts see ch.3 above and Fawcett, 1975, appendix 3.

In general, few geographically defined cognate groups have emerged from analysis of the research data. A group of three ambitious towers with polygonal buttresses and extensive flushwork decoration that straddles the border with Suffolk can clearly be defined as a local sub-type, and a group of towers in Norwich based around a single street, Colegate, show many formal similarities, though enough differences in the smaller design details and craftsmanship to obviate the need for a resort to common attribution.[295] What is seen more often is replication of individual elements of the design, so that in a small area 15 miles east of Norwich, for example, there is a group of towers with heterogeneous designs that are all topped with parapets that have sharply stepped, crow's feet crenellations.[296] Likewise in the west of the county there are two very dissimilar towers with notably similar pierced parapets expressing almost identical emblems, probably created by the same mason.[297] Though there is a general tendency for towers in the north and east of the county to use the major architectural constituents, such as doors, west windows and buttresses, as the main means of expression, where towers in the south of the county tend to rely more on surface decoration, usually in the form of flint flushwork, to create an impression. While direct local copying occasionally involved commissioning the same architects or master masons to replicate their work, more often imitation was of individual design elements and it was executed by different craftsmen.

The limits of taxonomic classification of local, minor ecclesiastical architecture are evident from a descriptive analysis of the towers in the group. As the sample was chosen on the basis of geography and chronology, not style, it was not affected by subjective judgements about architectural worth. What resulted from analysis of the research data was a picture of many different tower designs, the majority circumscribed by a broadly similar aesthetic approach, but representing a multiplicity of different design choices that reflect the cultural awareness of those who commissioned and built the towers. If an architectural style is to be characterised by the repetition of design features, only window tracery patterns observed in the towers could be said to constitute a style. The

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[295] The first group referred to is :Redenhall in Norfolk and Laxfield and Eye in Suffolk. The second group includes St George Colegate, St Clement Fyebridge, St Michael Coslany and St John de Sepulchre, all in Norwich. All these towers are referred to in Chapter 3 above.
[296] This group includes Filby, Ormesby St Margaret and Halvergate.
[297] Swaffham and Hilborough. See Chapter 3 above for a discussion of these parapets.

majority of tracery observed was made up of the scheme of mullions divided at the head of the window into supermullions, creating panels, or batement lights, usually with ogee arches, and headed by an oculus or sub-panelling. This theme, sometimes elaborated with subarcuation in the larger windows became almost standard from the beginning of the fifteenth century, some curvilinear forms persisting until that time. Moulding profiles show more variety, though there is a limit to the number of designs employed. Other than these two elements, which seem to reflect the input of craftsmen in the design process, the choices made were wide and various. Thus the basis on which the towers might be designated 'Perpendicular' is restricted. While it might be argued that the 'integration by framing' of west door and west window is in line with a more general Perpendicular design preference, it has little or nothing to do with the overall visual impact or character of towers, and furthermore leaves out of the reckoning less ambitious contemporary essays in tower building.

Iconography

Large west towers that dominate both the churches to which they are attached and the surrounding communities and landscape, built with great west windows and massive doors in highly sculpted door frames, and integrated with the nave by means of large tower arches, would have created a very different effect on the observers and users of churches to the plainer and smaller bell towers that had previously been the norm. One of the most striking of these effects would have been to give churches a grand entrance and to realign the axis of approach. Even if the daily entrance remained the door at the side of the nave, a church with an ambitious, innovative tower would have presented a western façade to the observer where previously there had been little cultural expression on this side of the building. In the face of such a radical change in the way that a church was experienced it has been necessary to investigate the connotative effect that the new type of tower would have had on viewers. If the means by which these

cultural effects were achieved are coherent, it is reasonable to deduce that their achievement was one of the motivations behind such designs.

In order to investigate the cultural implications of the new types of tower it is necessary to identify relevant aspects of the ideological milieu in which they were designed and built. The architectural implications of viewing a church building as a type of the new or heavenly Jerusalem have been considered since the Middle Ages.[298] The addition of a grand entrance to a building that had already been commonly considered a metaphor for the heavenly city and designed in ways to reinforce this, must have had a strong impact on any participant observer.

Baldwin Smith has established an iconography of portals and the architectural setting for ritual entrance, affirming a cultural link between pre-Christian Rome and the architecture of the Middle Ages.[299] He made the connection between the use of towered gateways as the settings for royal *adventus* in the classical world and the Christian symbolism of Christ as king, entering Jerusalem. To make a similar iconographical connection between the new type of parochial west tower in Norfolk and portals to the New Jerusalem it was necessary to investigate the ways in which the towers were experienced and used.

The doors in late medieval west towers in Norfolk were used for processional entrance into the church. There is a little direct evidence for this in the form of references in wills, but most of the evidence is deduced from the form of the doors and towers themselves and from the processional liturgy in use at the time. New west doors did not replace the customary lateral entrances for parishioners into the nave, but complemented them. They were built on a far grander scale, however, and the tower was often designed to emphasise their importance, with framing devices, integration with the design of large west windows and surrounding emblems and other decoration. As they were not designed for quotidian access to the nave, the importance with which they were invested by the overall design, suggests strongly that they were reserved for special occasions. These must principally have been the great liturgical

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[298] See Stookey, 1969, for a summary of the medieval sources for this architectural metaphor, in particular Durandus, Suger and Bernard of Cluny, as discussed in Chapter 4 above. See also Davidson, C., (ed.), *The Iconography of Heaven*, Kalamazoo, 1994.
[299] See Baldwin Smith, 1978, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 4 above.

processions of the church calendar. This is confirmed, not only by a reference in a will of 1493 to processions through the west door, but more importantly by evidence taken from late medieval Processionals – liturgical books for clerics and choristers to use during processions – prescribing that two great extra-mural processions should enter the church through the west door. While the processional routes used on Rogation days seem to have been decided by local custom, those for the Palm Sunday procession – the most important in the liturgical calendar – and the great late medieval festival of Corpus Christi were strongly tied to entrance into the church through a west portal. Furthermore, the liturgy of both processions is animated by the drama of symbolic royal *adventus*: in the case of Palm Sunday, a re-enactment of Christ's entry into the earthly Jerusalem, and at Corpus Christi, the procession of the consecrated Christ, representing the risen Christ, into the Heavenly Jerusalem. All this is made explicit in the liturgy of both processions.

The material forms of the types of tower suggest very strongly that they were designed as appropriate settings for these very dramatic liturgies in which the parishioners would have played leading roles. The imagery suitable for material depictions of the Heavenly Jerusalem would have derived principally from the description in the Book of Revelations, Chapter 21. This text would have been familiar to all and its imagery was reflected in the cultural life of the late Middle Ages in such literary works as the poem *Pearl* as well as in numerous visual representations such as those on the bosses of Norwich cathedral cloister. The emphasis on high gates with inscriptions and on the brilliance of the materials used in the construction of the heavenly city seems to have provided cues for tower designers and patrons to find equivalent effects in their designs. Furthermore, the increasing use of knapped flint and flint flushwork as surface decoration, especially around doors, base courses and on buttresses and parapets would, I believe, have connoted the jewels that were used as building materials in the description of the Heavenly Jerusalem in the Book of Revelations and in contemporary literature. The brilliance of newly knapped flint, especially when cut into complex geometric flushwork patterns as was increasingly common in the sample period particularly in the south of the county, would have impressed any observer probably accustomed to earlier towers being rendered with mortar and whitewash.

Investigating the means by which these effects were materially realised involved examining forms, emblems and motifs on the towers and relating them to available and appropriate contemporary models that would have suggested notions of a gateway to the Heavenly Jerusalem to a late medieval observer of and participant in the Palm Sunday and Corpus Christi processional liturgies. The two models that were adapted for use in the architectural iconography of the tower designers were the city gate and the conventual precinct gate.

Norfolk tower designs reference city or town gates in their general form and in a particular detail. Firstly, late medieval towers built in Norfolk, and throughout East Anglia, tend to have simpler crenellated parapets and more massive buttresses than grand contemporary towers in other parts of England. In the south-west, towers of similar degrees of ambition are usually topped with parapets that are dominated by multiple and often extravagant pinnacles. The crenellations, if they exist, are frequently pierced. Buttresses tend to protrude much less from the sides of the tower. The effect made by most Norfolk towers, in contrast, is of mass and solidity, and with simple crenellated parapets, suggests more the civic architecture of a town gate than an equivalent tower of Somerset or Gloucestershire. Secondly, the fact that the frames of many west doors were carved so that the complicated moulding of the arch and the jambs stops between three and six feet above the ground, giving way to a broad flat chamfer, seems to refer directly to a similar practice seen on civic gates, presumably a practical consideration given that carts and livestock would have been constantly knocking against the sides of the structure as they passed through.

Elements of conventual precinct gates were often imitated too. In the second quarter of the fourteenth century, gates such as that at Butley Priory in Suffolk and the Ethelbert Gate at Norwich Cathedral were the first to display flint flushwork. At Butley the main entrance is decorated with courses of dynastic heraldry and the Ethelbert Gate has oppositional figures carved in low relief in the spandrels of the entrance arch. Both these motifs are deployed on many occasions on Norfolk towers. On the whole these allusions to gateway architecture in the designs of later towers are not closely mimetic, but rather notional. The hypothesis that tower designers adopted the imagery of contemporary gatehouse architecture to suggest a type of towered gateway to the

New Jerusalem depends on the allusions being sufficiently resonant for contemporary observers. Rather as Krautheimer suggested that references to the Temple and the Holy Sepulchre were both notional yet intelligible through the many and varied designs of medieval "Temple" churches, so I contend that the echoes of gatehouse design in the forms and motifs of late medieval Norfolk towers would have been comprehensible, even vivid, especially in the context of the dramatic processional liturgies in which the parishioners were much more than passive spectators.[300]

An iconological interpretation of the material form of late medieval towers relies on the application of much knowledge of the contemporary cultural milieu and ideologies. At the risk of seeming determinist, this approach places towers in a cultural framework, illuminating both the motivation behind their commissioning and the context in which they were built and experienced. However, it is also determining in two respects. On the one hand the towers sustain and encourage certain interpretations, and this process is cumulative and creates a framework as much as being seen within one. On the other hand, it is the very success of these ideas in material form that changes the expectations and ambitions of the parish communities that commissioned the towers.

The Parish Community

The survey of material and documentation suggested very strongly that, in most cases, building an ambitious tower required more money, time and effort than any project previously undertaken in each parish. It sometimes also revealed the nature of the patronage behind the building project and even allowed, in a few cases, a glimpse into the politics of benefaction.

It is clear from the changes in design that are visible in the successive stages of many towers, as well as the fact that some towers are incomplete, that it took many years or decades to complete such a burdensome building project. Large projects, such as that at Stalham, proved too ambitious to be finished and others, such as that at Felmingham, were compromised in the latter stages of

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[300] See Krautheimer, R., 1942, and chapter 4 above.

building, presumably by a lack of funding. In many cases, successive building seasons can be read in the fabric of the flint rubble walls, and these usually progress expeditiously in sections of about six feet, until the walls reached the level of the gable of the contemporary nave, where there is often evidence of a longer building break. The necessity of reaching this height, so that the nave could be provided with a permanent closure, meant that sufficient funds should have been identified to initiate the project and bring it to a certain level.

Evidence for the organisation and administration of funding for these projects is never complete, though in the case of Swaffham it is nearly so. However, conclusions can be reached about the nature of patronage and the organisation of the financial effort from an examination of all the available relevant sources. These are principally the heraldry and occasionally inscriptions displayed on the towers, together with bequests made in wills, antiquarian sources that can provide evidence drawn from lost parish records, and the few extant parish records such as the Black Book of Swaffham or the Wymondham Register.[301]

Drawing on this evidence it is possible to compare the different registers of patronage that supported these great building campaigns. The massive tower at Wymondham was largely funded in the initial stages of the project by aristocratic benefaction, yet was finished with money raised by communal subscription. At Salle, there is strong heraldic evidence for backing by a group of upwardly mobile local gentry who not only built the tower, but rebuilt the whole church to an integrated design over a period of about 40 years – a remarkable feat of organisation when the size and elaboration of the building is taken into account. At Swaffham, the parish records show an even greater communal effort undertaken and funded by many of the townspeople, some admittedly wealthy, yet certainly not gentry. All three towers can be said to be amongst the ten or so most ambitious in the county. Yet the different registers of patronage are indicated not by size or elaboration in these cases, but principally by the displays of heraldry around and above the doors. At Wymondham, the heraldic devices are those of the benefactors that provided money from the start of the project. At Salle, the heraldry identifies not only the main financiers of the project, but

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[301] A transcript of the Black Book is kept in the NRO Parish Deposit 52/473. The Wymondham Register is in the British Library BL, Cotton, Titus C VIII.

unites them with royal and regional heraldry as well as religious emblems, the Arms of the Passion and the crossed keys and swords of Saints Peter and Paul. At Swaffham, where the money was raised without contributions from armigerous families, there is no heraldry, only blank shields around the base of the tower united with the emblems of St Peter and St Paul, the patrons. So, while each of these towers was funded by people from different social strata there is little difference in the degree of achievement and nothing inherent in the material forms to indicate register of patronage. It is apparent that all three were the products of communal enterprise. Even at Wymondham, where the heraldry proclaims the patronage of three aristocrats, we know from the Norfolk will registers that the benefaction of dozens of people from lower in the social hierarchy, if not more, was required to complete the tower.

At West Tofts, a modest tower in the south-west of the county, a further insight into the nature of communal patronage can be gleaned from the fabric. An inscription on a frieze around the base of the tower commemorates 'All the begyners of the werke' and is followed by the names of nine parishioners. Most of these names appear again in wills leaving sums to the building of the tower spread over a thirty year period at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries.[302] It can therefore be deduced that these 'begyners of the werke' were parishioners who set up and organised the communal effort that saw the tower building campaign initiated. The inscription suggests that their contribution lay in more than mere benefaction. The evidence of their wills suggests that they were not especially wealthy people and probably could not have provided the totality of the funding themselves necessary to get such a large construction campaign off the ground. So it seems they were co-ordinators of the funding and the commissioners of the building. It is highly likely that these ordinary parishioners had an input in the design process, and their commemoration in the fabric of the tower speaks not only of a desire to be prayed for, but also a pride in their achievement.

Analysis of the sample reveals that the type of patronage did not necessarily determine the form of the tower. Some of the most ambitious towers and the most elaborate designs were funded by parochial subscription, not by

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[302] See Chapter 5 above for details.

aristocratic patrons acting singly or jointly. Decisions of taste must have been negotiated through communal compromise. It has been shown that the majority of towers were built with the benefaction of multiple donors, even where the fabric suggests that armigerous patrons dominated the project. In fact, the evidence of wills gives the lie to the concept of the single-patron building. Even in cases where dynastic heraldry is displayed on a tower, there is often evidence that ordinary parishioners also contributed to the building costs, as at Wymondham, but also at Cawston and New Buckenham, for example, two towers with very ostentatious displays of the patrons' arms.

Late medieval towers throughout Norfolk are indicators of joint endeavour and local pride. At a time when the direct involvement of the laity in religion was intensifying, they speak eloquently of the concerns and priorities of all levels of lay society. Furthermore, they reveal the extent to which parish communities could be motivated and organised to realise complicated and burdensome projects even when, as for much of the fifteenth century, government on a larger scale was largely dysfunctional.

My research has shown how the study of parish church architecture can shed light on the motivation and ambitions of the people who built, paid for and lived with it. Axial west towers are only one element of the church building, though an increasingly important one in Norfolk in the late Middle Ages, yet they can reveal much about the whole. Questions of the transmission of style as well as the applicability of the notion of style can be addressed through this type of study. While certain individual design details, such as window tracery or moulding profiles, may respond well to taxonomic analysis, is it then valid to extrapolate their classification to include the whole building? My study suggests that easily classified details are not so readily classifiable when aggregated into a whole. This is, I suggest, an area of investigation that merits further study as the system of style classification in English medieval architectural historiography has sometimes obscured important questions concerning taste, choice and the design process.

It is important that discussions of style are seen in connection with notions of patronal taste. This avoids the trap of ignoring the human element in

the design process and of producing a teleological account where style seems to 'evolve'. It is striking, when the results of the material analysis of my research are considered, that so many groups or individuals decided to commission a new type of tower, a new cultural form, yet were sufficiently sophisticated and culturally aware to consider a variety of choices and models and to arrive at designs that are consonant with the other parts of the church built by other groups of patrons. Only this can explain the widespread adoption of a general type that in its individual examples reveals such a wide range of invention, selection and composition. The homogeneity of the type set against the heterogeneity of the design details reveals the sophistication and the motivation of the patrons. Here were groups of people who were not content merely to imitate on a wholesale basis, to commission master masons to replicate previously achieved successes, but were sufficiently concerned to become involved in the design process and seek out elements from diverse models to improve their great projects.

Given the renewed interest in the history of the medieval parish as a social unit, I believe it is time for further study of the parish church as a focal point of that unit. Historians such as Duffy have used elements of the fabric of the church to illustrate their ideas about the parish and lay religion, so it is important that the fabric of these buildings is studied again with more than the aim of establishing a classification of architectural style.[303] For example, it is possible to apply knowledge of medieval liturgy to an iconological study of architectural form and decoration at the level of the parish church. The results can be a two-way street, shedding light on the ritual setting and performance of the liturgy as well as the motivation of those who saw fit to contextualise the ritual in a particular material form.

The study of individual elements of a parish church building can help to illuminate some of these issues. It can bring into sharper focus the extent of communal endeavour at this level of society and, in illustrating the pride in that collaboration, underline the solidarity of the parish as a body which gave people a sense of identity and belonging. It can reveal the extent to which people from different levels of society made sophisticated choices of architectural taste and how, by the end of the Middle Ages, this had resulted in different ways of

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[303] Duffy, E., *The Stripping of the Altars*, New Haven and London, 2005.

visualising the parish church as a place for the performance of the liturgy and private devotion as well as a focal point for the community. This geographically limited study of parish towers can only hope to make a small contribution to this debate. It is important that more such studies are carried out, for only an aggregate of such works can adequately address the questions raised in this thesis.

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