

CHURCH TOURS 2018

These Tours are a continuation of those started by Richard Butler-Stoney and Hugh Holbeach in 1970, before The Norfolk Churches Trust was even thought about!

In April the Church Tours started the 2018 season in the eastern part of the County, right over at Coltishall, a Church with Saxon origins. There is always a buzz for the first Tour, time to catch up with good friends and acquaintances not seen for many months through the winter! The Tour then went to a very different church at Hoveton St Peter, built of red brick in 1624. Hoveton St John, with some of the many hatchments (family shields) seen this year, kindly provided cups of tea to sustain us and then on to Horning. The afternoon ended with a Service of Compline, so fitting for the Church of the Parish which includes the ruins of the Benedictine Abbey of St Benet at Holme,

The month of May saw the Tours visit Churches between Dereham and Wymondham, starting at Reymerston, a church standing well back from the road and probably often missed. Then to Hardingham in splendid isolation on its hill with only a very large Georgian Rectory to keep it company. The highlight at Hardingham was to be shown the actual Victoria Cross awarded to the Warden's Ancestor in 1882. Kimberley showed us some old glass, 14C English and 16C from Cologne, but also a window of 1997 glass. Following refreshments there, we went on to Carleton Forehoe, accessed by walking across a meadow. Here the Evensong was accompanied by the West Gallery Musicians in Victorian dress with ancient instruments.

Over to the west side of the County for the June Tour where we visited first Ingoldisthorpe hidden away off the beaten track. Then to Snettisham with its soaring stone spire seemingly at the east end. The chancel has disappeared, so the crossing tower is above the present high altar. Heacham is another Church that has seen many changes and its shortened tower is heavily buttressed to the north. The very welcome cup of tea helped us on our way to Sedgeford, with one of the 124 special round towers to be found in Norfolk. Again the Church has seen changes over the centuries and has lost its north transept and has a reduced chancel, but it now has modern facilities either side of the tower where the nave overlaps it to the north and south! Evensong was taken by one of the local Readers, well supported by the organist and an enthusiastic congregation.

In July the Church Tours came to Sparham with its magnificent tower and macabre screen panels of skeletons, and then to Elsing, with splendid tracery and medieval glass in the Chancel, as well as the enormous memorial brass remembering Sir Hugh de Hastings +1347. Yet another large Church was seen at Swanton Morley, with its connection with Abraham Lincoln's family and also the RAF during World War II. Tea and biscuits were kindly provided single-handedly by the Rector. The final Church to be seen in 2018 was the much smaller Foxley, a very homely and welcoming Church. The kind donors of the screen c1485 are portrayed in the bottom corners of the panels on the doors. The Saints shown on these doors are the four Latin Doctor, still revered after the Reformation. The Church was well filled with local people as well as many of our crowd for Evensong.

Sadly this was the last Church Tour of 2018, although there were still two similar Tours to go to for the Round Tower Churches Society, on the first Saturdays of the month. Once November comes round, the whole thing starts again with Richard Barham, Michael Pollitt and I planning and contacting the Incumbents for Church Tours 2019! Then in February and March comes the writing of the 16 new Church Guide leaflets, one for each Church to be visited during the year, before the Tours start again in April.

Lyn Stilgoe