

Round Towered Churches in Norfolk

& the Viking Legacy

Trail 4: South-west Norfolk.

Four round towered churches near Swaffham

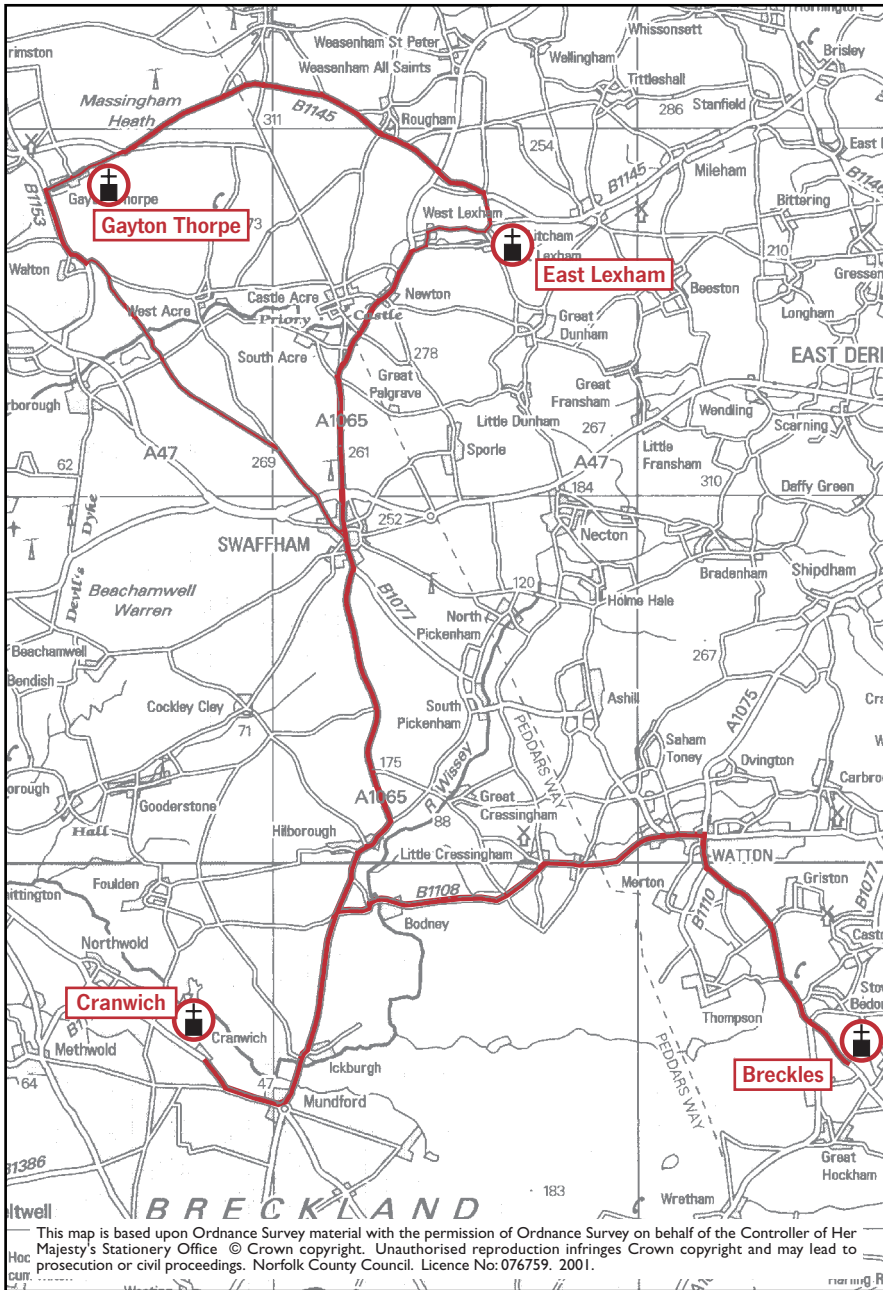


**NORTH SEA
VIKING
LEGACY**



Follow the secret trail and claim a golden coin!

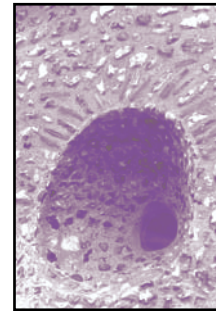
(see inside for details)



TRAIL 4

THIS TRAIL is one of a set of four which invites you to explore different parts of the Norfolk countryside in search of round towered churches and their links with the Viking legacy. Each booklet contains information on Norfolk's cultural links with the Vikings, and explains how this can be found at each of the churches on the trail. If you manage to find the secret plaques at each of the four churches in this booklet, you can claim a golden coin! (See page 10)

GLOSSARY



Apse: a semi-circular ending of the chancel in early churches.

Carstone: type of brown sandstone found in north-west Norfolk, sometimes called 'gingerbread' stone.

Chancel: area of church containing the main altar. Always positioned at the east end of the church.

Double splayed window: (left) a type of early window where the opening is positioned in the centre of the wall thickness, and the surrounding walls are cut away inside and out, to direct light into the building.

Ferruginous conglomerate: type of dark brown stone formed from small pebbles bound in iron deposits.

Long and short work: (right) an early technique where corners are formed using cut stone in a pattern of horizontal and vertical pieces.

Nave: main body of the church where people gather for services. Always positioned at the west end of the church.

Quoins: cut stone forming corners of buildings.



AN INTRODUCTION TO VIKING NORFOLK

For three hundred years, between the late eighth century and the late 11th century, Scandinavian invasions strongly influenced the course of history in all of northern Europe and beyond. Vikings invaded the eastern side of Britain in the late ninth century, and for nearly a hundred years afterwards this part of Britain was under the 'Danelaw'. At first these invasions brought violence and destruction but, over time, this changed. Peaceful trading replaced violence and Viking settlers became absorbed into local communities. They married local people, and adopted some of the local customs. Local communities were influenced in turn by the culture and customs of the in-coming settlers, creating an Anglo-Danish culture which set eastern England apart from the rest of Britain. The areas around the Baltic and North seas all share this Viking legacy which influenced the development of local cultures, including aspects of language, art and architecture. One architectural feature which most of these countries have in common is the use of the round tower in church buildings.

How ancient are the round towers?

Many of the round towers in Norfolk incorporate easily recognisable Anglo-Saxon techniques such as triangular headed openings, long and short work and tall narrow openings. This has led people to believe that the round towers pre-date the Norman Conquest of 1066. But these local forms and techniques are often found next to easily recognisable Norman features such as scalloped capitals and billet moulding (left). It seems that the incoming French stonemasons and local masons combined techniques to produce a new hybrid form, which lasted for up to eighty years after 1066. This new form is sometimes called the Saxo-Norman overlap.

Why build round towers?

Until recently it was generally believed that church towers in Norfolk were built round due to a lack of good local building stone to form square corners. Recent research has questioned this idea. Several

- Triangular headed openings (Anglo-saxon)
- Billet Moulding (Norman)



of the churches attached to round towers in Norfolk were built from a local stone called 'ferruginous conglomerate' which could have been used to build square towers. Also, there are several examples of square towered church buildings where large flints rather than cut stone have been used successfully. The technical problems involved in building a round tower linked to a square building were probably greater than the problems of building a square tower with difficult materials. Nevertheless, when people came to build these towers in the twelfth century, they chose to build them round. It seems likely that it was broader cultural reasons which guided this choice.

The Viking Legacy

When the round towers were being built, the county probably had stronger links with the coastal communities around the Baltic and North Seas than it did with the rest of England. There were strong trading links, and a shared Scandinavian legacy, making it likely that Norfolk traders found they had a lot in common with people across the water.

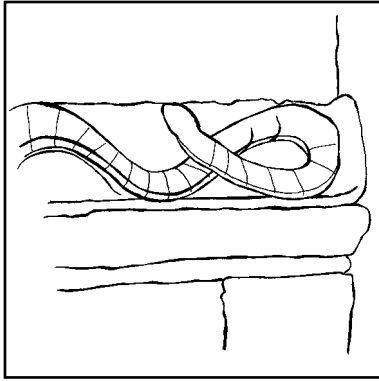
The earliest round towers date from the 10th century and were built in north Germany. The idea then appears to have spread along north European trade routes. Churches with round towers can be found in the north German regions of Lower Saxony and Schleswig Holstein, the Danish region of Skåne (now Southern Sweden), Norway (one example), and the Orkney Isles, all regions strongly shaped by Viking culture. It seems possible that the Viking descendants living in these regions were an important influence on the development of a new Christian architecture in stone.

Round towers were first seen in East Anglia in the radiating chapels of Bury St Edmund's Abbey from 1081, and shortly after, at Norwich Cathedral. The idea was then adopted by smaller parish churches, along with the characteristic round double-splayed windows and other architectural details also found in north European churches. A more direct Viking influence can be seen in the ironwork on doors, and in the sculptural forms found at some of the round towers.



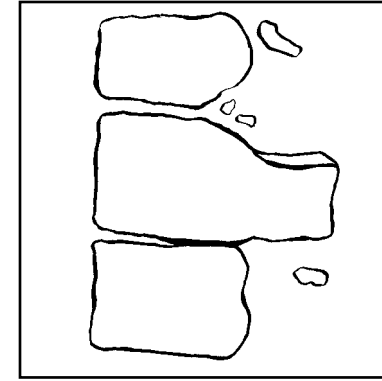
**NORTH SEA
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SECRET TREASURE TRAIL CLUES - TRAIL 4



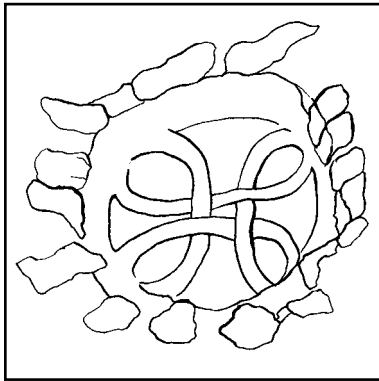
Breckles

I lie between the hissing snakes which guard the tower.



Gayton Thorpe

I lie where the old church ended.



Cranwich

Find me beneath a never-ending knot of stone.



East Lexham

Find me underneath the cross.

TRAIL 4

The Viking legacy in the south-west

This trail takes you to four round towered churches near Swaffham, in south-west Norfolk where you can find evidence of the Viking Legacy. Each tower contains examples of unusual architectural sculpture, some of which appears to be directly influenced by Scandinavian styles.

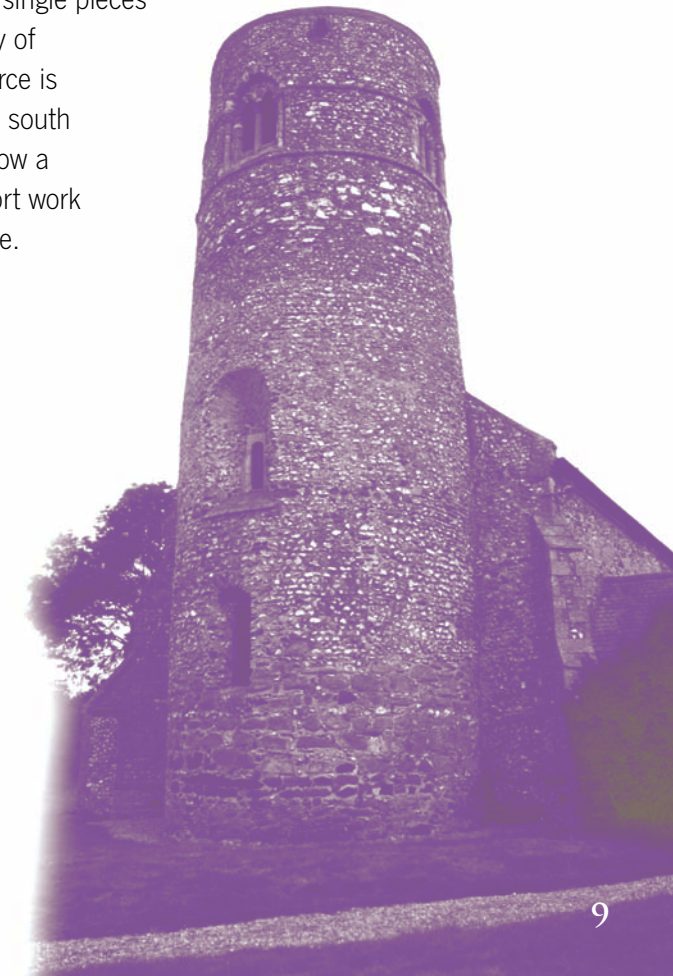
Breckles: Unusual square openings formed out of one piece of stone are found in the tower. Carved snakes on the insides of the tower arch reflect Scandinavian styles found elsewhere in Viking metalwork.

Cranwich: A good example of different cultural traditions being used together. The unusual interlace windows in the tower, cut out of one piece of stone, suggest Scandinavian influence. The north and south doors are both decorated with Norman sculpture, while the east end of the nave is finished with long and short work, a typically Anglo-Saxon technique. The bell openings dressed with uncut flint show that flint can be used to create architectural details.

Gayton Thorpe: The large double-splayed window in the tower here is of a type commonly found in eleventh and twelfth century churches in Scandinavia and north Germany. They are not common in Britain, but are most often found in Norfolk. This supports the view that the round towered churches here were part of a cultural tradition shared with north European countries. The height and width of the early church can be seen in the west end of the nave, where the original corner, made from local carstone, is embedded in the wall. The tower has late-Norman bell openings.

East Lexham: This church has unusual bell openings, each carved from single pieces of stone. They show a variety of influences for which the source is difficult to find, although the south facing opening seems to follow a Norman form. Long and short work forms the corners of the nave.

● Gayton



INSTRUCTIONS

How to claim your golden coin

At each of the four churches on this trail, we have hidden one small plaque which you have to find.

In the centre pages of this booklet there are four pictures. These pictures are the same size as the plaques you are looking for.

Each plaque is hidden near the part of the church shown in the picture.

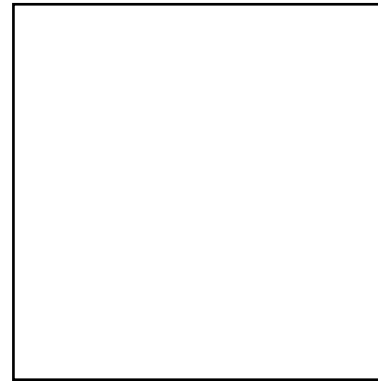
Next to each picture in the centre pages there is a clue. The clue gives you some more information about where the plaques are at each church.

Using the pictures and the written clues, find the plaque at each church. Then, using the panel on the opposite page, make a rubbing of the plaque. To do this you will need a soft pencil. Place the back cover of this booklet over the plaque so that it fits in to one of the squares on the page. Then gently rub your soft pencil on the page over the image.

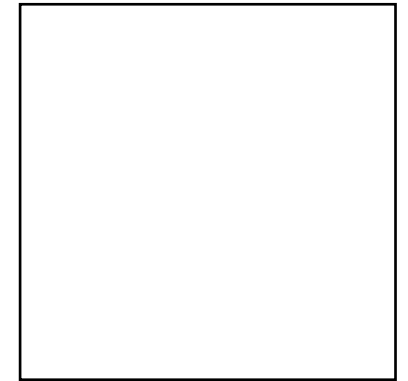
When you have completed a rubbing of each of the four plaques on the trail, fill in your name and address on the back cover, detach it, and send it to us at the address shown. We will then send you a golden coin with the Viking legacy logo, for you to keep.



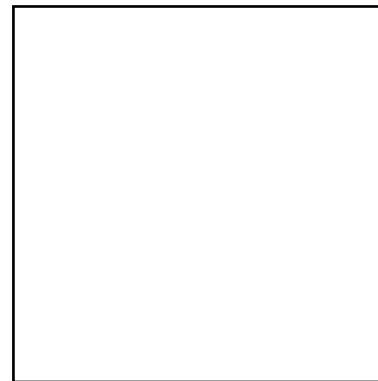
Fill in your plaque rubbings here. (Use a soft pencil.)



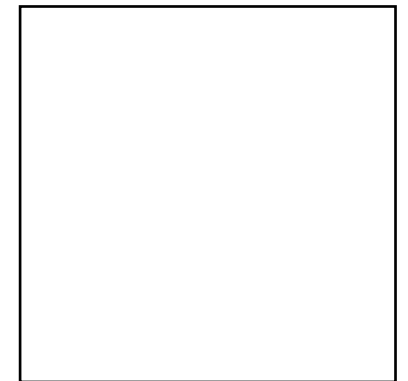
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Your Name and Address.....

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Telephone.....

Age.....

Where did you purchase this booklet?.....

To claim your golden coin please return to:

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