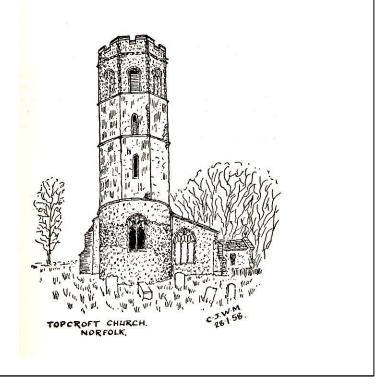


# The Round Tower

Vol. XL111 No 3

March 2016



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Please forward orders to: - Mrs P Spelman, 105 Norwich Road, New Costessey, Norwich NR5 0LF. Cheques payable to The Round Tower Churches Society.

## **Lead Roof Appeal**

Merton and Thwaite churches both had lead stolen from their roofs in autumn 2015.

The churchwardens have secured their churches against the winter weather to keep damage to a minimum. They have now started the difficult and lengthy process of seeking funding to repair their roofs.

RTCS is providing some financial support for these churches but the income we have from members' subscriptions necessarily limits what we are able to do. We are therefore making a special appeal to members to help these and other round tower churches who lose their lead. Any gift you feel able to make will help churches to repair the damage to their roofs.

Please send a cheque to Richard Barham at 6 The Warren, Old Catton, Norwich, NR6 7NW. You can also hand over cash or cheques to Richard on our tours. This appeal will close on the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016. Please mark your envelope 'Lead Roof Appeal'.

# The next issue is June 2016 and the deadline for contributions is 1st May 2016.

Please send items for publication either as email attachments or on disc as **separate** files — text, photos, drawings etc., or by post to:-

## **Anne Woollett and Paul Hodge**

The Cardinal's Hat
Back Street
Reepham
Norfolk
NR10 4SJ
Tel: 01603 870452
anne.woollett@tiscali.co.uk

## **Membership Subscription**

Minimum £20 (overseas £30) a year of which 25% goes towards the printing and posting of The Round Tower magazine and administration. The rest goes to the Repair Fund of the RTCS.

Magazines are published in March, June, September and December. The membership renewal date is the first day of the month following the application for membership.

To join the Society or to make any enquiry about your membership please contact:-

#### Mr Richard Barham

6 The Warren, Old Catton, Norwich, NR6 7NW Tel: 01603 788721

## THE ROUND TOWER

The quarterly magazine of the Round Tower Churches Society www.roundtowers.org.uk

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Apologies in advance. The June magazine may be up to two weeks late in getting to you. Your editors will be enjoying Sicily when the magazine normally goes to print.

For up to date information visit the website. For up to the minute information follow us on Twitter or like us on Facebook. Links to our Facebook page and our Twitter feed can be found on our website. www.roundtowers.org.uk

## A Tour of Six South Norfolk Churches with John Vigar. June 2015.

John Vigar is a well-respected ecclesiologist, author, lecturer and leader of church tours. A member of our Society for many years John has recently moved to Norfolk and has been reacquainting himself with our East Anglian churches. His June tour visited six churches including five round tower churches, all in the Hempnall Benefice. John gives a brief introduction at each church pointing out some of the most interesting features and then allows time for exploration and discussion. A group of fifteen met at Diss railway station (many had travelled from London by train) where we were welcomed, boarded a coach and set off for our first church.

**Bedingham St Andrew** 'a rewarding and unspoilt church' with clerestory windows over nave and chancel giving a well-lit interior. The 15th century screen has fine tracery, while the chancel has a dropped window sill sedilia with matching angled piscinae on either side. A 15th century font stands on two steps, the upper with quatrefoil decoration. Two ancient benches at the west end of the nave have carvings of human heads – male on one side and female on the other.



Bench end at Bedingham

**Woodton All Saints** can be seen across the fields from Bedingham. Here we found a re-cut square Norman font. A search beneath carpets near the tower arch revealed the small figure brass of Christian Bacon, who died in 1532. Two more recent memorials on the chancel wall told of the loss of two sons of the rector during the Great War. However, perhaps the finest memorial here is to Ann Suckling, shown as a sculpted kneeling figure. She died in 1653 and was the great, great grandmother of Horatio Nelson.



Woodton, All Saints

Topcroft St Margaret has triple octagonal stages to its tower. Having already seen an octagonal top to the tower at Bedingham and two octagonal stages at Woodton this gave rise to much comment. The first octagonal stage above the circular base has brick quoins as does the second stage which also has brick framed lancet bell openings. The top stage and parapet with stone quoins and knapped flint, were probably added in the 15th century. The non-cardinal faces have feigned two-light windows. In the church we found a 15th century 'lion font' and the Royal Arms of George III dated 1789. (Editors Note. Stephen Hart discusses octagonal tops to round towers (Chapters 17-20) in his 2003 book The Round Tower Churches of England).



Topcroft, St Margaret.

Fritton St Catherine is obviously one of John's favourites. The circular section of the tower has an added 15th century octagonal belfry stage with brick quoins. Another 15th century font features here and a selection of wall paintings. An impressive St George dispatches the dragon by a lance through the neck, while there is also a large St Christopher. An unusual painting is that of St Edmund of Abingdon who was Archbishop of Canterbury in the 13th century. The paintings on the lower sections of the screen were admired by all. There are vivid illustrations of the Four Latin Doctors and St Jude with a boat and St Simon with a fish while the faces of John Bacon, the donor, his wife and their children stare out at us across the years from the Middle Ages.

The font at Fritton, St Catherine.

Morningthorpe St John the Baptist was the only tower of the tour, circular from base to top. It seems it underwent considerable medieval reconstruction and may once have had an octagonal section which was replaced when the tower was raised again. Inside the church was another 'lion font' an elaborately carved piscina and the Arms of George III.

Shelton, St Mary was the surprise of the day for those on their first visit. Apart from the earlier flint tower, the rest of the church dates from the late 15th century. Built of red brick (the high status material of the time) with stone dressings, on the orders of Sir Ralph Shelton it is an outstanding church. The nine bay clerestory and the aisle windows are spectacularly Perpendicular. Entered through the lofty south porch, the interior has a feeling of space with much to delight. Everywhere, it seems, one sees the rebus of a shell and tun in both stone and glass. The east window has portraits of the donor and his wife at prayer. There is also an exquisite Blessed Virgin flanked by a stem of lilies and the Holy Spirit as a dove. Other features of note, are a memorial to Sir Robert Houghton in the south aisle, a 'lion font' and a carved Royal Arms of William III.



Shelton, St Mary

Returning to Diss we reflected on our good fortune, being blessed with fine weather and a diligent bus driver. Thanks to John for giving us a day to remember.

Stuart Bowell

## **Norwich Round Tower Churches**

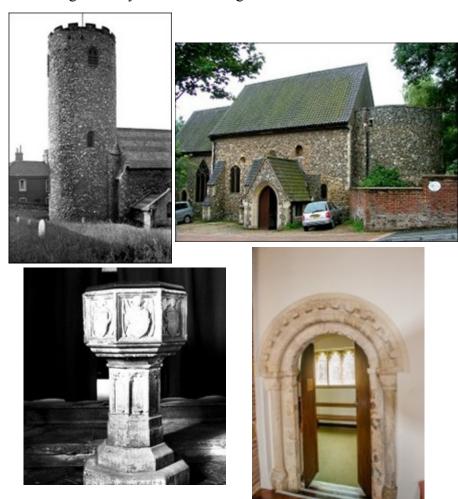
When we plan the programme of visits each year we aim to visit churches we have not visited in some years. We last visited the four remaining round towers in the City of Norwich in 2003. That tour was on a Sunday afternoon so we could get round the City more easily than would be the case on a Saturday afternoon. However, Sundays in the City are now not very different from other days and the two churches not usually open to visitors can be visited during Heritage Open Days. We are suggesting, therefore, that people check out when the churches are open and take themselves on a personal tour (www.visitnorwich.co.uk). Here are some notes about the towers and churches to guide you. There are also two excellent websites to consult: Norwich Historic churches (www.norwich-churches.org) and Simon Knott's Norfolk churches (www.norfolkchurches.co.uk). Richard Harbord and Stephen Hart have also written about these churches in The Round Tower Magazine which can be viewed on the RTCS website (www.roundtowers.org.uk and go to The Round Tower Magazine page).

### Saint Julian

On an alley between King Street and Rouen Road, this church was severely damaged by bombing in World War Two. In contrast to other churches damaged by bombing, St Julian was rebuilt because of its connection with Dame Julian of Norwich, a C14 writer and mystic. She lived in a cell attached to St Julian's church and there she wrote her famous book *The Revelations of Divine Love*, the first known book written in English by an Englishwoman. Her hermitage was destroyed at the time of the Reformation. Two Saxon windows were revealed in the north wall during rebuilding and the stump of the round tower may also be of an early date. St Julian's is normally open throughout the year.

A nice touch is that the fine Norman doorway into the rebuilt cell was brought from the ruins of St Michael at Thorn, another church lost to the bombing. The reredos behind the high altar is of Oberammergau craftsmanship dating from 1931, which survived the

bombing. Another fine feature is the font (c1420) which was moved here from nearby All Saints church after it was declared redundant in 1977. It has carvings of saints around both bowl and stem. Stained glass is by the firm of King of Norwich.



Photos of church exterior by Plunkett (1930s), Simon Knott (recent), font by Plunkett and doorway by Britain Express.

### Saint Etheldreda

Only a short walk from St Julian and, also situated between King Street and Rouen Road. St Etheldreda was closed in 1961 and declared redundant in 1975. It is now a studio for artists and sculptors which is usually open on Heritage Open Days. An extra floor has been inserted which is approached by spiral metal staircases at both east and west ends. The lower part of the round tower is original but the octagonal belfry is a rebuild of 1723. There is a zigzag course over the door. The porch is C15. The church was in a dilapidated state and largely rebuilt in 1880s. A memorial of note on the north wall of the chancel is for William Johnson who died in 1611. He and his wife face each other across a prayer desk with their four children behind them. Any original colour on the memorial is now long gone and it has a sooty appearance as if it has been outside in the smog for many years. Most guides refer to this memorial as having been moved from nearby St Peter Southgate church when it was largely demolished in 1887. However, Blomefield in his History of Norfolk, written well before 1887, mentions the memorial in his description of St Etheldreda! Stephen Hart writes about St Etheldreda in The Round Tower March 2010.







St Etheldreda tower and nave by Simon Knott, Skillet drawing before Victorian alterations and Plunkett photo of the interior



## **St Mary Coslany**

North of the river Wensum, this church is just west of Pitt Street and south of the Inner Ring Road. Closed in 1974 and declared redundant in 1975, the church has had several uses. Currently the nave is full of books, the chancel is a studio for a sculptor and the north transept is a kitchen. The church is usually open during Heritage Open Days. The tower is perhaps the oldest of Norwich's round towers, with Saxon shaped windows but with a shaft of Caen stone, readily available only after the Norman Conquest. The tower had an additional stage which was removed in 1908 when the openings we now see were revealed. The tower housed six bells but was not strong enough to support them all so some were sold. The last two bells were moved to St Catherine's, Mile Cross in 1937. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century the area had many prosperous residents and the church was given a makeover in the 1460s with transepts, fine perpendicular windows and porch, and many valuables which were sold off to pre-empt their removal during the Reformation. The church has a fine roof: the nave and transepts meet above the crossing in a fine display of woodwork and the central boss depicts the Assumption of the Virgin. There are a number of interesting memorials including one in the chancel- an Elizabethan memorial to Martin van

Kurnbeck who died in 1579. It is similar to the memorial in St Ethelreda's church, Martin faces his wife across a prayer desk and their three children kneel behind them. Once again the memorial has a sooty appearance. There is some good heraldic glass in the windows and the south chancel window has a depiction of the Annunciation dating from the early C20. Richard Harbord wrote about St Mary Coslany in The Round Tower December 2012.

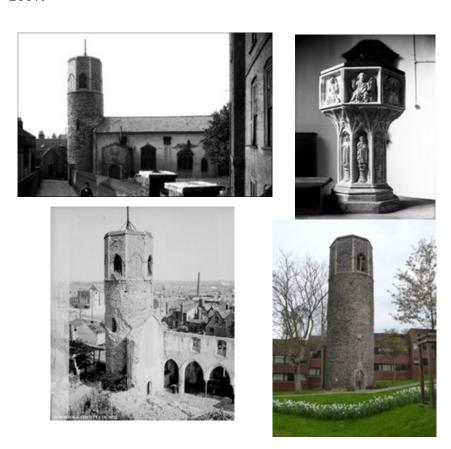


St Mary Coslany tower, roof, and memorials photographs by Anne Woollett

## **St Benedicts**

The nave and chancel were severely damaged by bombs in 1942. The body of the church was demolished but the round tower was left. It is now hidden away amongst modern housing just south of St Benedict's Street and close to the Inner Ring Road and can be viewed at any time.

The tower has a door in the west wall with plain stone reveals, a small tower arch (blocked with modern brick) and remnants of wall indicating of the position of the nave. Excavations in the 1970s indicate that the tower was built on flint and mortar foundations in about 1200. The octagonal top and belfry openings were probably built later but before 1400. The church's fine font (c1380) was not damaged in the bombing and was later taken to Erpingham church where it can still be seen. Richard Harbord wrote about St Benedicts in The Round Tower in September 2007.

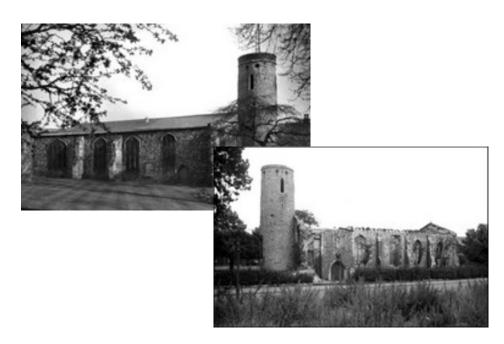


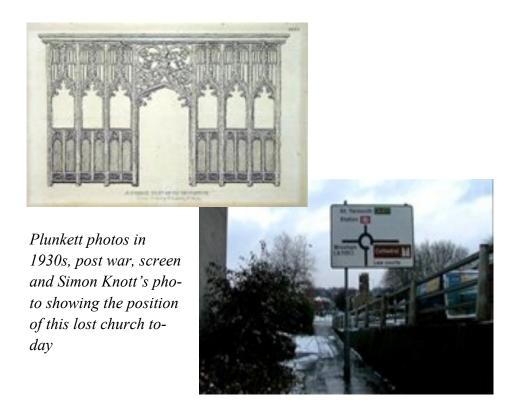
Plunkett took the photos of St Benedicts and font in 1934, and after the bombing. The photograph of St Benedicts as it is today is by Anne Woollett

### St Paul's: a lost Norwich round tower

The site of the church is largely under the flyover and road leading to the roundabout on the Inner Ring Road north west and diagonally opposite St James church (now the Puppet Theatre). St Paul's church was severely damaged by bombs and subsequently demolished. The church and adjacent hospital (for poor strangers, vagrants, sick and impotent folk) were founded at the time of Bishop Herbert de Losinga in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century (ie a century before the Great Hospital). The tower was probably Norman with a later (possibly 15<sup>th</sup> century) octagonal top. The top was removed in 1819 and capped with brick and stone. Round cast iron wall plates (nb not round windows) were put in to strengthen the tower. The rest of the building was largely late 15<sup>th</sup> century. A Cotman drawing of 1814 shows a late 15<sup>th</sup> century rood screen with elaborately carved tracery and armorial shields: at this time there were wealthy people living in the parish. For a time the church was used as the city's Bridewell. The church and the hospital were lost under the road in 1970s: the graveyard is now a small park and playground.

Richard Harbord wrote about the lost Round Tower church of St Paul Norwich in The Round Tower, September 2008.





## St Mary in the Marsh: a round tower church within the cathedral precinct.

Another lost round tower and church. St Mary's in the Marsh was close to the Cathedral and functioned as the parish church for the people living in the Precinct. It lay to the south of the Lower Close in a working area. A fine seven sacrament font was installed in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In 1560 the church was closed, the parish merged with nearby parishes, the building materials sold off, and valuables taken to other churches. In 1564 the parish was allowed to worship in the Cathedral, in St Luke's Chapel in south ambulatory which can be visited when the Cathedral is open. The font in St Luke's chapel is from the original church. Look also at the Dispenser Retable (1380s) behind the altar which was found and placed here in 1847. It is one of the finest examples of late C14 artwork in the country- there is a good new booklet.

St Mary's church was converted into houses which were rebuilt in the late C18 and called St Mary's Chant. The cellars of one house include part of the wall of St Mary's and it is thought that the base of the Round Tower was destroyed to create the cellars for an adjoining house. A blue plaque indicates the site of the church. Richard Harbord wrote about St Mary in the Marsh in The Round Tower in March 2011.







St Luke's chapel, font, and retable by Simon Knott

Richard Barham and Anne Woollett

## Good news.

In the recent round of grant applications the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded Denton, St Mary £249.400 towards what HLF describe as 'very urgent essential repairs'. Welborne, All Saints was awarded £215,100 towards what HLF describe as 'The Fawlty Tower'!

## ROUND TOWER CHURCHES SOCIETY TOURS

7th May 10am Holton, Wissett, Spexhall, before **AGM** at Spexhall Village Hall 2.15pm.

Saturday Tours, first Church 2.30pm

4th June Potter Heigham, Dilham, Witton

2nd July Little Saxham, Higham, Snailwell

6th August Bexwell, West Dereham, East Walton

3rd September Thurgarton, Wickmere, Thwaite,

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

## **CHURCH TOURS**

on Sundays, first Church at 2.30pm.

17th April Scole, Billingford, Thorpe Abbotts RT, Brockdish

15th May Harpley, Houghton, West Rudham, East Rudham

19th June Felthorpe, Alderford, Swannington, Attlebridge,

17th July Hilborough, Bodney, Didlington, Foulden,

Everyone is welcome to join us and all our tours are free, though donations are encouraged at every church. Teas will be provided by one of the churches during each afternoon. The Sunday Tours normally end with an optional form of Evening Prayer at 6pm or 6.30pm. Further details from 'Lyn Stilgoe 01328 738237.

## THREE CHURCHES REVEALED

## A CHURCH CRAWL LED BY ROY TRICKER AROUND THREE CHURCHES IN 'THE SAINTS' BENEFICE IN NORTH-EAST SUFFOLK

On 25th June there will be an opportunity to join a Church Crawl around three of the Churches in *The Saints* Benefice, and to hear the stories the buildings have to tell.

- Edward Fernley Bisshopp and Herbert William Bryans at St Cross:
- lost wall paintings and round tower churches at Ilketshall St Margaret;
- tallest banner stave locker in England and a window given by a future king at Ilketshall St John.

Roy Tricker has been a crusading church crawler since the age of four! He now spends much of his time sharing his passion for these amazing buildings. He is author of many church guide books — almost 250 to date. He says 'every old church is the most interesting in the country, because it has a unique character, well worth getting to know and love'.

The 25th June Crawl begins at St George's Church, St Cross South Elmham at 2:30pm, then to Ilketshall St Margaret, concluding at Ilketshall St John – where wine and nibbles will be available. Participants travel in their own vehicles.

Tickets for the event - for which a donation towards the maintenance of St John's Church Ilketshall will be appreciated – are available from Rosemary Watkin on 01986 781225, Lynne Morton on 01986 781240, and Maurice Philpot on 07817 108239. Cheques: payable to Ilketshall St John's Church – send to Rosemary Watkin, St John's House, Ilketshall St John NR34 8JJ.

### **SUMMER TOURS 2015 – PART 1**

Our 2015 Tour Season opened at **Eccles St Mary** which is situated on the edge of woodland and is reached by a rough track from the nearest road. Here the tower is circular for its full height and the belfry windows are framed with dressed stone and have Y – tracery. Evidence of a former south aisle, demolished in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, can clearly be seen from the partially bricked up arches, the upper half of which have been left as windows. Inside the church the full glory of this former arcade is more obvious. The roof and benches are relatively modern but the outstanding internal feature of this church is the large medieval Mensa slab, mounted on modern supports. Cast out at the Reformation it was discovered in the churchyard in 1957 and restored to its rightful place. The churchwarden told us that the crack in the slab was not the result of defacing by zealots at its removal, but occurred when it was dropped during reinstatement.

Quidenham St Andrew has a Norman tower with a later octagonal belfry atop, which has a Victorian shingled spire. In total the tower and spire rise to almost 80 feet. The south aisle and porch date from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, while the north side of the nave has a pleasing Norman doorway. Inside the church, the roof and benches are modern and there are many memorials to members of the Keppel family who were at Quidenham from the 1760s. Two particularly interesting features are the carved wooden Stuart Royal Arms and a poor man's box dated 1639.

Croxton All Saints stands on a small hill. The tower is circular and has a contemporary octagonal belfry with stone dressed openings. Above the south aisle are brick framed clerestory windows. Inside the 15<sup>th</sup> century hammer beam roof has tracery in the spandrels. A simple 17<sup>th</sup> century wooden baluster font stands inside the porch. Croxton has a very unusual war memorial in the form of a carved wooden triptych. Its central panel is painted with angels above a Great War battle scene.

Painted in gold letters at the base of the triptych running across all three panels are the words 'make them to be immortal with the saints in glory everlasting'. We were made most welcome on our visit by a number of parishioners who expressed their gratitude for a recent grant from the Society

June gave us a fine day and an O.S. map was a great help in finding **Hassingham St Mary**. Here the tower has a contemporary octagonal belfry with lancet windows of dressed stone. The parapet above has decorative flushwork. There are many putlog holes in the tower as well as evidence of an early window, framed with medieval bricks below the later inserted west tower window. Sheltered by the south porch is a Norman doorway with chevron and billet decoration. A thatch fire in 1970 caused considerable damage when some of the roof timbers fell into the nave, consequently the interior has much very modern restoration work.

Acle St Edmund was our second church of the day with a post Norman tower and a contemporary octagonal belfry with lancet openings. The nave here is thatched while the chancel is under slate and there are porches to both north and south. On entering the church the font makes an immediate impression, with lions and woodwoses around the stem, angels and flowers under the bowl. The panels have traces of colour and one panel shows the Blessed Virgin Mary holding the body of a crucified Jesus. Perhaps the font's most interesting feature is a carved 'orate pro animabus' inscription on the top step, with the date 1410. Beyond the rood screen, with its fine tracery, on the east wall of the chancel is a medieval inscription in Latin warning that 'the brute beast plague rages hour by hour'. Beneath it is a monumental brass to Thomas Stone, minister of the parish for 43 years, who died in 1627.

**Fishley St Mary**, amid its tall Scots pines, is remote down a lane but can also be reached by footpath from Acle. Circular for its full height, the upper section of the tower is of brick and was built on top of the former Norman belfry, whose openings are clearly visible blocked by brick in the flint fabric below. The internal diameter of the tower is six feet nine inches. Only Ashmanhaugh is smaller, but it is not medieval,

being built in 1849. A dedicated group of supporters care for this church, some of whom came to meet us. As the church has no electricity, they had brought along a portable generator, so water could be boiled to make tea. This was much appreciated by all at the end of the afternoon tour.

## Stuart Bowell





The Mensa slab at Eccles St Mary.

Croxton All Saints.



RTCS at Hassingham St Mary.



Quidenham St Andrew.

#### ST MARY, RICKINGHALL INFERIOR

The regional Societies who comprise the National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies (NADFAS) frequently undertake volunteer work. The Diss Society is one such, and has a Group of Church Recorders. These volunteers choose local churches, in consultation with PCCs, Incumbents and Archdeacons (within the Church of England) to make a record of just about everything that is within the church.

Having chosen St Mary's, Rickinghall Inferior as their ninth church (to date), they commenced work in 2013 to record, photograph and, if necessary, research the history of the contents of the church. The result of their labours, which usually takes 18 months to two years to complete, is a unique Church Record. Five copies are prepared, one each for Historic England (formerly English Heritage), the V & A Museum, the Church Care Library, the County or Diocesan Archive and the church itself.

The completed Record for St Mary's was presented to the church by the Recorders on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> February, 2016, during Evensong followed by light refreshments.

Jean Sheehan

## Interactive map of round tower churches. A gift from Temple Trail.

'Wonderful. This is going to get a lot of use'.

'Interesting, informative and fascinating'.

Are you planning tours of round tower churches or do you just enjoy looking at and learning about round tower churches at home? Whatever your interest in round tower churches this interactive map and associated links is for you.

Many thanks to Temple Trail for their hard work. Tom from Temple Trail tells us that 'I knew that I wanted to do something after visiting St Mary's, Haddiscoe and being amazed by its beauty. The map is the result of that inspiration'.

http://thetempletrail.com/round-tower-churches-map/

## Concert: 'Spring, the sweet Spring' Saturday, 23rd April 3 p.m. at St. Andrew's, Great Ryburgh NR21 0DZ

A Shakespeare 400 event with songs by Vaughan Williams, Finzi and Quilter. Nigel Wickens (bass-baritone) accompanied by Gill Smith (keyboard) Peter Trent (lute).

Tickets to include afternoon tea: £10 Concessions £8 in advance from 01328 829413

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