

The East Window, St Clement Colegate



Although the originality of the window has been questioned ('might be a Victorian invention': Norwich Survey), a drawing of 1805 by Thomas Kerrich (British Library, Add. MS 6753 fol. 262) shows the design of the tracery that is still apparent today. It is a three-light window with ogee arches that flow into the beginnings of a reticulated pattern, though there is room for only two complete units. Normally such elements would simply be cusped but here they are more complex, with an added dagger at the base supporting a curving horizontal bar. An added sophistication is that these detailed central elements are in lower relief and more finely carved than the main mullions and arches, lending them an attractive delicacy. It is possible that the design was chosen with a specific glazing scheme in mind but unfortunately there is no record of what was depicted in the window.

Fully reticulated tracery survives in Norwich on the south side of St Andrew's Hall (the nave of the Dominican Friary) and is widespread across the country from the early 14th century. Perhaps the closest local parallel for variations on the theme can be found in the windows of Bishop Reynolds' chapel, which date from the redevelopment of the bishop's palace by Bishop John Salmon in the years between 1319 and 1325. There however the tracery is more heavily moulded and flowing. At St Clement's the mullions rising from the points of the lateral ogees go vertically up to the arch head (a Perpendicular characteristic) bending only slightly into the curvature of the arch. A date in the second quarter of the century is suggested by these details, which have however no immediate parallels in Norwich. It is possible that more comparable material will be found in north Suffolk as the patron of the church was the Cluniac priory at Mendham.

