



THE MEDIEVAL CHURCHES OF NORWICH:
CITY, COMMUNITY AND ARCHITECTURE

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The transeptal chapels of St Mary Coslany

TESTAMENTARY EVIDENCE supports a date in the mid-1460s for this work. In 1464 Gregory Draper left 26/8d to edify the cross-aisle and a request to be buried in the new chapel on the south side (NCC BETYNS 90); also in 1464, Robert Wood, citizen and carpenter, bequeathed 20/- to the cross-aisle and requested burial in the southern chapel, which was dedicated to the Virgin and contained a Pieta image (NCC BETYNS 164).

The northern equivalent was St Thomas's chapel where Henry Toke was buried in 1466, leaving 10 marks to furnish it as well as candles to burn before the Easter Sepulchre and the Pieta (NCC COBALD 107). Other imagery noted by Blomefield included Magdalen and St Anne with the Pieta in the south chapel, and John the Baptist with St Thomas in the north (Blomefield 4: 489-90).

THE COHERENCE of the transept chapels indicates the extent to which the work and patronage was co-ordinated. These were not conceived as two separate spaces commissioned by individuals or families making independent choices but as a well-integrated architectural project. For one thing, the overall length of the transept is 14.52m, which is the length of the nave (20.45m) divided by the square root of 2. For another, the windows of the two chapels are the same as regards tracery pattern and dimensions. It is likely that one mason (no doubt with a team of assistants) was responsible for the whole design. It seems likely that the very recent work at St Peter Hungate, constructed at the instigation of John Paston around 1460, provided the immediate stimulus for the transept of Mary Coslany. However, the greater scale of St Mary's meant that the roof was higher, giving more scope for large windows. In particular, the impressive size of the north and south windows indicates that light and no doubt stained glass were a priority. It may not be just coincidence that the leading Norwich glazier of the period, John Wighton, had been buried in the porch at St Mary's and that his workshop remained active for several decades after his death. Unfortunately, none of the glass is extant.



Northern transept chapel, St Mary Coslany
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WHERE IMAGERY DOES SURVIVE is on the transept roof. Here, the central boss shows the Virgin, assumed into heaven in an aureole.



Transept ceiling, St Mary Coslany
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SURROUNDING HER are four bosses, each carved with an angel, on the diagonal arch braces. Their range of costumes suggests that different orders of angels were being represented, no doubt designating Mary as *regina angelorum* (Queen of the Angels). The arrangement of the transeptal chapels and their roofing at the same height as the nave is a further reminiscence of St Peter Hungate; there too are carved wooden bosses, but showing the Last Judgement surrounded by angels.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Blomefield, Francis, and Parkin, Charles, 1805. *An Essay Towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk, Vol. 4*. London.