



## About St Faith's

The exterior of this modest little 14th-century flint building, tucked away down a narrow lane, hides an amazing interior. Only when the church was ruinous in the 1960s and being considered for demolition did the extraordinary series of medieval wall paintings come to light.

Little Witchingham – 'Wicca's settlement' – is Anglo-Saxon in origin. The first church appears to have been built in the early 12th century with additions in the 14th, including the south aisle (later reduced in length in the 17th century) and a tower completed in the 15th. St Faith's had become almost ruinous by 1791 and was rescued, with the roof renewed in the 18th century and the chancel east window in the 19th. It had become derelict again by the mid-20th century with trees growing inside.

Only then were the remains of one of the most complete schemes of medieval wall paintings in the country uncovered and conserved. In the 14th century almost the entire church was covered from floor to ceiling with paintings including depictions of the 12 Apostles flanking Christ, the Passion and Resurrection and a mesmerising scroll pattern with grapes and vine leaves. There was also a Christ in Majesty, St George and the Dragon and symbols of the Four Evangelists.

Once the importance of the church was realised, initial repairs were carried out by the Council for the Care of Churches and the Norfolk Churches Trust. After St Faith's passed into the care of The Churches Conservation Trust in 1991, further restoration work was undertaken, especially to the wall paintings, enabling their wonderful vibrant quality and detail to speak eloquently for themselves.

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We've saved over 340 beautiful buildings which attract almost 2 million visitors a year.

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### Access

Due to their age, historic church floors can be uneven and worn, and lighting can be low level. Please take care, especially in wet weather when floors can be slippery.

### Help us do more

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The Churches Conservation Trust  
Society Building, 8 All Saints Street, London N1 9RL Tel 0845 303 2760



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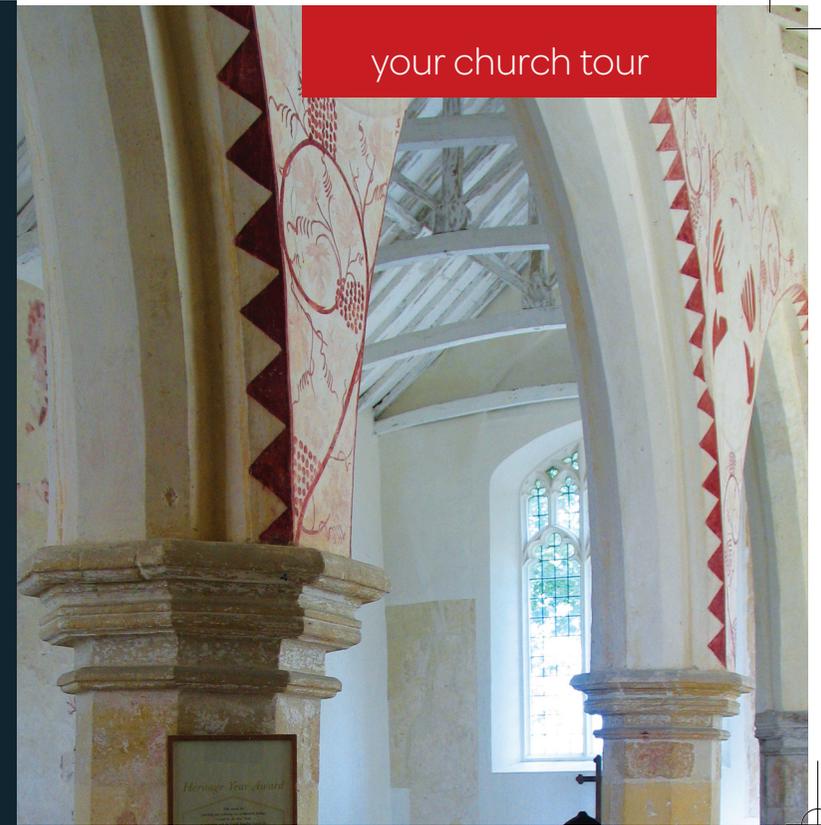
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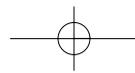


Church of  
St Faith

Little Witchingham, Norfolk



THE CHURCHES  
CONSERVATION TRUST



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**1** The **images** between the arches on the south side of the arcade facing into the aisle depict the Four Evangelists with their symbols: the Eagle for St John, Lion for St Mark, Angel for St Matthew and Ox for St Luke. The painting of the Ox was partially destroyed when the south aisle was shortened during the 17th century. These are considered to be some of the finest examples of medieval wall paintings in the country.

**2** The **north wall** of the arcade facing into the nave is one of the less decorated areas of the church. Although the wall was prepared for painting, the work was never completed, possibly due to the devastating effects of the Black Death in 1348.

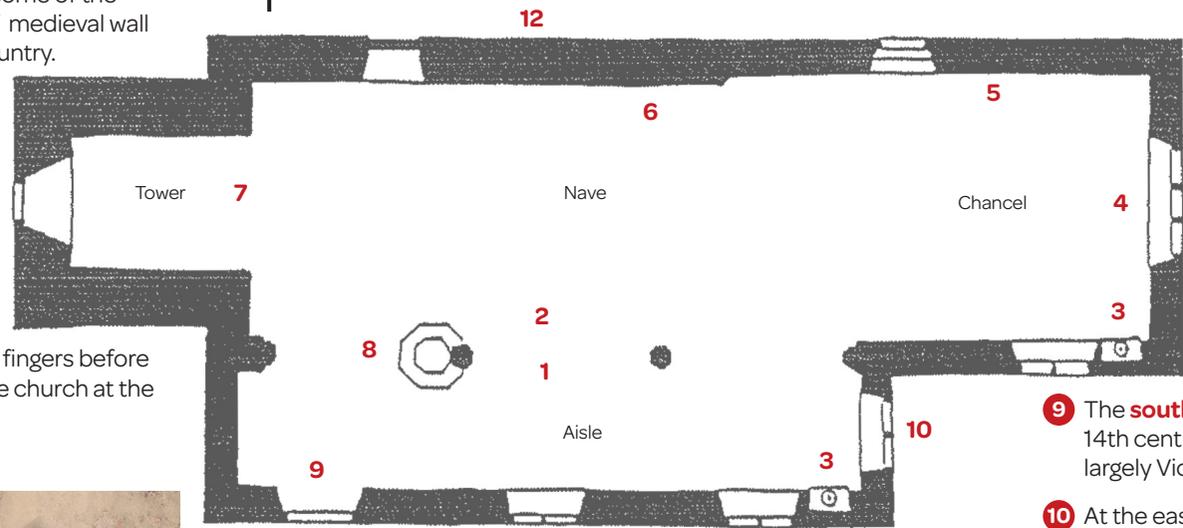
**3** In the chancel is an architecturally simple **piscina**, for the priest to wash his fingers before the Mass. This was probably added to the church at the same time as the one in the south aisle.

**4** The wooden **altar** is not original to St Faith's, and was brought into the church in 1975; however it has a stone inset that was part of a previous altar in St Faith's. The stone itself is believed to have originated from the Priory of Our Lady of Walsingham, 20 miles to the north-east of Little Witchingham. The black lettering around the east window is a Post-Reformation text, showing that the church continued to have some form of decoration after medieval times.



**5** A medieval **painting** of St George and the dragon can be seen next to the bricked up doorway to the rood loft. The rood loft would have been a gallery over a wooden screen that separated the chancel and nave.

**6** A central figure of Jesus can be seen on the **nave north wall**, with the 12 Apostles to either side. It can be difficult to distinguish the Apostles, but towards the west end, St Andrew can be clearly seen holding a book and a saltire (X-shaped) cross. Below, a series of paintings depicts the Passion and Resurrection in alternating red and black panels – Doubting Thomas can be seen touching Jesus' wound in the second panel from the right. The lower level of this wall has a detailed scrolling vine design, with large bunches of grapes – a design that can be seen repeated around the church.



**7** Above the **tower arch** is the torso of Jesus. His head was lost when a window (now blocked) was inserted. The tower arch was also heightened, which destroyed Jesus' feet and legs. The angels and kneeling figures may represent donors who gifted money to the church.



**8** Near the entrance the stem and plinth of a medieval stone **font** stands against a column. A later Victorian stone font, decorated with quatrefoils and triangles alternating with tracery around the bowl, can be seen in the nave. The later font was originally from St Michael's church, Whitwell, which overlooks the marketplace in nearby Reepham less than three miles to the north.

**9** The **south door** and most of the **windows** are 14th century. However, the glass and tracery are largely Victorian.

**10** At the east end of the south aisle evidence can be seen of where the **wall** was moved in the 17th century to shorten the aisle. Some traces of the internal plastering – now on the outside of the building – are still visible.

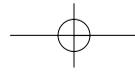
**11** The large Perpendicular **window** at the east end of the chancel is Victorian, but the shape of its medieval predecessor is clearly visible in the surrounding stonework.



**12** The 12th-century **north wall** is the oldest surviving section of the church. The wall is formed of regular lines of flint work and carstone, a local Norfolk stone containing iron ore, that was widely used in Norman times. Additional height was added to the wall at a later date, and the north door bricked in.



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