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All Saints, Walsoken Off then, to the Cambridgeshire town of Wisbech. This wasn't an attempt to start on a new county, but in the eastern suburbs of the town there is a kink and a loop in the border, the Norfolk side cutting in to grab and hold the churchyard of All Saints.

We got the key from the Rector: "Why do you want to go inside?" he asked grumpily. I indicated Peter waiting patiently at the gate, and said "We're devil-worshippers. We want to sacrifice a goat on your altar". This seemed to satisfy him. "Just sign the visitors book before you leave, and put the key back through the letterbox" he said as he closed the door in my face.

The rectory, though beside the church, is in Cambridgeshire. The westwards graveyard extension is also in Cambridgeshire, and the sign shows that it is maintained by Fenland District Council. There is a path through to the old churchyard, and about ten feet to the west of the tower you enter Norfolk. Walsoken church is another architectural wonder, this time the biggest Norman church nave in East Anglia, with a magnificent Early English stone tower and later spire – this part of Norfolk is like an architectural textbook. If you stand in Cambridgeshire looking east, the western face of the tower is breathtaking, a Norman doorway flanked by Early English arcading. In the 15th century, the aisles and clerestory were added or elaborated, and even the porridge-like cement rendering can't detract from its grandness.

But inside, the Norman takes over. The long round-headed arcades are superb, climbing into the chancel in one direction and disappearing under an exquisitely beautiful EE tower arch in the other. Never has Norman looked so elegant. And this is the setting for one of the most wonderful art objects in Norfolk – the Seven Sacrament font. This was what we had come to see, we hadn't really come to sacrifice goats.

Having seen the most primitive of the series a few hours before at West Lynn, here is the most ornate and elaborate, An eve-of-the-Reformation delight that makes us wonder what an English Renaissance might have been like. The panels are crammed with details, but the most remarkable feature is the underside of the bowl, which is carved intricately with designs of angels, flowers, stripwork and the like. It reminded me very much of the font canopy at Trunch and the tombs at Oxborough, and it is contemporary with both, being dated 1544 on the base – an extraordinarily late date, barely three years before the injunction against images that saw the death of fonts like this.

Anti-clockwise from the eastern face, the panels show Mass (the Priest elevating with his back to the viewer), Confession (the figures similar to West Lynn, but finely detailed, and the Confessor clearly male), Confirmation (including babes in arms, as is usual in Norfolk), Baptism (again as at West Lynn, the baby being immersed head first), Crucifixion as the eighth panel, Last Rites (quite a gathering around the dying man), Matrimony (the bride daintily lifts her skirts in her left hand) and Ordination, the Bishop holding his crozier as he touches the Deacon). You can see all these images enlarged below.

The panels are relatively unvandalised; probably, the shallowness of the reliefs allowed them to be plastered over by the reformers without them being knocked flush. Around the shaft are elegant Saints: John the Baptist, Dorothy, Peter, Catherine, Paul, Margaret, Stephen and Mary of Magdala, a thoroughly orthodox selection typical of the eve of the Reformation. Finally, around the base is a dedicatory inscription asking us to pray for the immortal souls of S Hoynter and Margaret his wife and John Beforth chaplain. It is punctuated by little shields carved with the Instruments of the



Passion. As I so often say, if this was in the V&A we would all hurry down to London to see it, paying handsomely for the privilege; but here it sits in the suburbs of a fenland town, still in use and there for all to see.

In the 18th century, someone in this parish seems to have had an obsession with the Judgement of Solomon – this is depicted as a wallpainting at the west end, with a wooden statue of the man seated in judgement, and there are four paintings of the same subject hanging in the chancel. A statue of David with his harp hangs incongruously above the chancel arch. It was actually quite fascinating to see reminders of that century's obsession with the Old Testament; so often, the Victorians were embarrassed by it, and did their best to replace it with loud medievalisms.

There are a good number of surviving medieval bench ends, but they are all mutilated. They appear to show seated figures, and may be any number of things. They've been claimed as Saints, but I think they may be part of a Seven Deadly Sins series - one of them is determinedly masculine, with his legs spread, his cloak open and his genitalia curiously unvandalised. He may be lust, and the one who appears to hold a sword would then be Anger rather than St Paul. There are standing figures in arcades on the side of the bench ends as at two of the Wiggshall churches, similarly vandalised, presumably in the 16th century.

There is more old woodwork up in the chancel in the form of stalls. These have heads on them, battered rather than vandalised this time; the Bishop in his mitre is particularly good.

A curiosity is the Priest door towards the east end of the south aisle. Above it, there is a five light window. Now, this is unusual, but it reminded me of something I had seen a month or so before at Castle Acre. There, the Priest door has been filled in above, and has created the absurd legend that it was originally big enough for a knight on horseback to ride through. Obviously, it was originally something like the one we find here.

There are the worn remains of what looks as though it was a heart burial in the north aisle - the photograph I took didn't come out, but it shows a hand apparently holding a heart-shaped object, which is more likely to be a heart than anything else.

The medieval roof has been coloured to bring out the angels in the hammerbeams and the Saints in the wall posts. It is a bit garish, but to be fair to the Victorians, they generally did a good job here. Most of the glass is excellent, and includes Christ giving his commission to Peter (he indicates the sheep with his left hand), the Good Samaritan, and the Three Marys at the tomb, a particularly popular subject in this part of Norfolk. There is also a quite stunning resurrection scene; the angels in this particular window are amongst the most gorgeous I have seen in Norfolk. There is also a fine 20th century window at the west end of the south aisle.

About this time, one of the churchwardens came in and chatted to us. He was a lovely man, genuinely interested in his church and also interested in what we thought of it. I am afraid that I can bore for England about Seven Sacrament fonts, but he listened cheerfully, and so I put the Rector's earlier taciturn briefness down to his being unusually busy - probably, he was halfway through writing his sermon for tomorrow.

This is one of the most interesting churches of the Norfolk marshes – perhaps just beaten by Walpole St Peter, but the font here is the best single thing I saw all day, and joins my growing list of East Anglia's finest church art objects. Lets hope the V&A doesn't get to hear of it.