Gissing St Mary roof imagery

All are listed from E-W (N/S1-N/S7).

Introduction

The scarcity of surviving double hammer-beam roofs across Norfolk is significant, given their remarkable concentration in Suffolk.[1] The nave roofs at Gissing and Knapton are the only extant true double hammer-beam roofs in Norfolk. If one includes the false double hammer-beam versions in the naves at Swaffham SS Peter and Paul and at Tilney All Saints, there are four, widely dispersed across the county.[2] In contrast, three of the four Essex double hammer-beam roofs are clustered and all are near the border with Suffolk. [3] Taking into account unknown losses of other roofs to iconoclasm, changing faith or taste and the elements, its scattered manifestation raises the question of the motivation and inspiration for the selection of this roof form in Norfolk. In this context, it is interesting to note that Gissing's roof has far more affinity with its counterparts at Coddenham, Grundisburgh and Stonham Parva, 24, 29 and 19 miles south respectively in Suffolk, than with the single hammer-beam roof at Wymondham, only half that distance to the north.

The location of this ambitious roof type at Gissing in a church of modest size without aisles or a clerestory today is not unprecedented, as demonstrated at Knapton. However, it is relatively unusual. That there were upper windows at least in the south wall at Gissing is evidenced by Ladbrooke's c1820 drawing.[4] The window to the west above the doorway was the largest, but three more diminutive openings were located above the level of the main glazing. The upper windows may have been filled in when the two fourteenth-century windows were replaced in 1876-7, by apparently faithful replicas of similar scale.

The early history of Gissing St Mary is enigmatic, but the round tower and lower sections of the nave and chancel walls probably date from the late eleventh century, pre-dating the current nave roof by almost four hundred years. An earlier roof pitch of approximately 45 degrees is visible in the flint fabric at the west. One of the north windows features Decorated tracery, but the others are Perpendicular, like the impressive north porch, for which there is a bequest of 1474.[5] The roof would seem to date from around the mid-to-late fifteenth century, but to date I have found no documentary evidence to support this contention, either for Gissing or allied Suffolk designs.

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[1] Bettley and Pevsner 2015, p. 31. 'Double hammer-beams are even more concentrated [than single hammer-beam roofs] in Suffolk: thirty-two in England as a whole, twenty-one in Suffolk, four in Norfolk, four in Essex, three in Cambridgeshire.'

[2] From Tilney All Saints in the west to Knapton in the north-east is approximately 56 miles. Gissing is at least 36 miles south of Knapton and 29 miles south-east of Swaffham. Swaffham and Tilney are 19 miles apart.

[3] Sturmer St Mary, Castle Hedingham St Nicholas and Gestingthorpe St Mary the Virgin are grouped near the north-west border with Suffolk and are characterised by open spandrel tracery and carved pendant bosses; the latter two have been attributed to Thomas Loveday and share resemblances with the hall roof at St. John's College, Cambridge. The fourth roof is in the 'East Anglian-style' church of Great Bromley St George to the north-east.

[4] Detail from author's own copy of lithograph. See also Ladbrooke 1823, vol. 3, pl. 21. In a slightly earlier drawing from the north-east dated c1800, the viewpoint obscures much of the north elevation of the nave.

[5] Cattermole and Cotton 1983, p. 249. The windows date from 1876-77, but appear to represent accurate copies of those they replaced, judging from Ladbrooke's c1820 study from the south.

The association of the Kemp family with Gissing seems to date back to the fourteenth century, when John Kemp was granted the manor.[6] Kemp heraldry is found in some of the spandrel carvings in the nave roof and the jousting shield held by an upper hammer-beam-end angel references the Kemp name, as discussed below. It suggests the possibility of Kemp funding towards the roof and the family acquired 'at least part of the Gissing manors' in 1467.[7]

The 2006 Record and Analysis Report on the roofs drew parallels between the Gissing nave roof and several Suffolk true double hammer-beam exemplars, which may suggest a possible date range. They range between 15 and 37 miles from Gissing and from my direct observation the closest parallel is found on a larger scale at Coddenham St Mary, some 26 miles south.[8] All share common characteristics, such as brattished collars, although there are disparities. For example, the roof at aisle-less Gislingham spans a wider nave and has two sets of purlins, as at Knapton and Coddenham; it also lacks the short king posts from collar to ridge. The upper hammer-beams in the nave roof at Grundisburgh St Mary terminate in hammer-posts with pendants, rather than angelic carvings, yet the angels against the king-posts above the collars are not entirely dissimilar to those against the upper hammer-beams at Gissing. The Coddenham roof in particular may offer a useful comparison for possible dating.[9]

Canopied wall-post figures

Like the roofs at Knapton SS Peter and Paul and Tilney All Saints, the nave roof of six bays at Gissing was installed to protect existing church fabric, yet it fits relatively neatly at the east and west ends. Wall-posts WPN/S2 and 4 are cut short above the window arches. This is typical of a number of late medieval roofs mounted over earlier fabric, with which they can have an uneasy relationship, as at Knapton, where they overhang the window arches. The lower section of all bar one of the Gissing wall-post figures has been chopped diagonally; there is evidence of previous attachments to the base of the abbreviated posts, but one can only speculate about the possible loss and/or replacement of corbels or angelic relief carvings prior to the renovations of 1876-1877. Coddenham does not offer an indication; although the niches and figures are comparable to those at Gissing, the bosses at the wall-post bases there are clearly restoration work.

Figurative carvings on wall-posts are not found in all late medieval church roofs with angelic representations. They are not exclusive to double hammer-beam roofs. There does not seem to have been a standard arrangement of wall-post figures in angel roofs where they appear. There were practical considerations; numbers depended upon the scale of the roof and they represented an additional expense. Nonetheless, other factors would also have influenced the selection and order of these intercessory figures; for example, at Emneth St Edmund, the dedicatory saint faces Christ at

[6] Blomefield 1805, pp. 162-181. 'William [Haysyngs], the youngest, had GISSING assigned to him, which he left to his son (as I take it) Phillip de Hastyngs, whose daughter Isabell, in 1324, married Alan Kemp of Weston, in Suffolk, Esq. to whose son John the said Phillip granted the manor called Gissing, and to his heirs for ever, from which time it hath continued in that family'.
[7] Hitchin-Kemp 1902 https://archive.org/stream/generalhistoryof00kemp/generalhistoryof00kemp_djvu.txt [accessed 15 April 2017].
[8] Wilson Compton Associates 2006, p. 16.The others are at Gislingham, Woolpit, Grundisburgh and Kersey.
[9] There appears to be evidence of patronage of the clerestory at Coddenham (similar to that at Stonham Aspal of c1440-60) and maybe the roof. The clerestory inscription states: 'orate pro animae Johannis Frenche et Margaret.' The lower purlins are embellished like those at Woolpit and Grundisburgh. There is potential evidence of carpentry and carving links across this group.

the east end. Like those elsewhere, the figurative wall-post carvings at Gissing are integral to the roof structure. They stand, or are seated in relatively stunted ogee canopied niches.[10]

Several of the canopied figure carvings at Gissing appear to be rather crudely carved Victorian replacements, as shown in the plan below. For example, whilst the damage to the bodies of WPN/S6 suggests iconoclasm, the crisp carved edges of more intact figures like WPN4 and WPS2 indicate restoration work. The nature of some of the original carving is probably more fairly represented by the full rounded drapery of some of the extant carving at Coddenham. (Examples at Coddenham include WPN1/2/4/6, although some figures such as WPN3 are totally mutilated). At Gissing, some drapery folds are similarly full and curvaceous, as in WPN2 and 7, WPS3 and WPS5-7. These contrast with the cruder straight restoration folds of WPN1, 4 and 5 and WPS4. The remnants of WPN/S2 and 6, WPS2 and 5, WPN7 and moulded posts flanking the forms more generally suggest that the original figures were seated, as the Coddenham figures appear to have been.

Some of the facial features at Gissing look suspiciously Victorian and there is clearly repair work around some heads. This suggests that restoration work disguises a pattern of destruction similar to elsewhere. For example, several wall-post figure heads have been mutilated at Coddenham St Mary and not replaced; at Knapton SS Peter and Paul and at Earl Stonham St Mary, they were also a primary target for deliberate damage. Given the apparent lack of documentary evidence to confirm restoration work to wall-post figures and/or heads at Gissing, careful scrutiny from scaffolding would be valuable.

As at Coddenham, there is very little extant evidence at Gissing of the attributes that were probably carried by at least some of the figures. Some carvings have been deliberately disfigured; the hands of WPS3, WPS1 and WPN2 are sheared away and the front of WPN3 has been hacked off flat, removing any detail. The hands of WPS2 are crossed at the waist, those of WPN4 across the chest and those of WPN5 appear joined perhaps in prayer at waist height, but we cannot be at all confident that these represent medieval work. If they are replacements, they surely differ from their medieval predecessors. (Victorian specifications for restoration work can be misleading. For example, at Knapton, Scott's specification emphasised that new carving should be created 'in exact conformity' with the medieval design; it is difficult to reconcile this with the addition of angelic carvings where there were none surviving, or with the unpainted bulky winged forms and inauthentic facial expressions of the low-level restoration figures).[11]

Despite the ravages of iconoclasm and apparent restoration work, it is reasonable to propose that the extant figures represent apostles and/or saints or possibly prophets, from fragmentary material evidence and comparison with those in less ravaged schemes. The scroll probably held by WPS7 may signify an apostle carrying a clause of the creed or a prophet. At Knapton several wall-post figures hold scrolls and their hats and attire suggest that they are prophets. They hold painted scrolls.[12] Prophets hold scrolls on screen panels from Coddenham St Mary.[13] In the most sophisticated wall-

[10] The niches resemble those at Coddenham, although the latter are surmounted by a different design.
[11] SC/KN/29 1882, pp. 10-12. 'Carefully take down such portions of the carving as it is necessary to refix and refix same in their original positions. Such portions of the old carved work as are mutilated are not to be replaced but where ever the old carving has been removed it is to be replaced by new work in exact conformity with the old design'.
[12] Some of these have clearly been repainted during restoration.
[13] Bettley and Pevsner 2015, p. 177. These are not on view in the church.

post arrangements and on painted screens, prophets are often depicted wearing floppy or unusual hats, as seen at Bury St Edmunds St Mary and on the screen at Salthouse St Nicholas. Prophets appear in other chancel screen panels, as at St Michael Aylsham and All Saints Thornham, where they tend to wear floppy hats, are interspersed with apostles or saints and are generally associated with scrolls). At Gissing, the turban-like headwear of bearded WPN6, hat of WPS1 and close-fitting hat of bearded WPS2 seem to represent Victorian invention, so we cannot be certain whether the medieval heads were adorned with headwear. Other figures like WPN2, WPN3, WPN5, WPS4 and WPS5 have long wavy hair, but not all can be trusted as medieval. There are no identifiable attributes to suggest inclusion of virgin martyrs.[14] A mixed scheme of apostles and saints seems most likely at Gissing, but prophets could have been included.

Screens were often constructed with twelve panels, in which depictions of the twelve apostles were often (albeit not always) accommodated. The central screen at Ranworth St Helen is a sophisticated example. The number of wall-posts in roofs was arguably more variable. At Emneth St Edmund, in a nave of six bays (as at Gissing), twelve apostles and saints are represented with St Edmund and Christ. At Knapton, where there are eleven bays, the scheme is more diverse, including apostles, saints, kings, bishops and prophets.

Jacobus de Voragine's 'Legenda Aurea' (The Golden Legend) is a compilation of saints' lives (dating from the 1260s) which was extremely influential in the late medieval period; more versions are known to have been printed than those of the Bible between 1470 and 1500, including four English editions.[15] It derived from a range of sources, including legends supposedly first recorded by Abdias (bishop of Babylon) in the first century AD, which were later translated into Latin. Other medieval writings also informed portrayals of the apostles, including those of the thirteenth-century Dominican friar Vincent of Beauvais.

Early Christian art had established the representation of the apostles barefoot 'in tokene of innocence and penaunce', in classical costume comprising a long robe with a cloak worn over the shoulders, 'in token of the virtue of pouert [poverty].[16] Yet it seems that was not until the fourteenth century that they all developed individually identifiable emblems.

St Peter generally carries a key or keys of the kingdom of heaven as promised to him by Christ (Matthew chapter 16, verse 19). St Paul holds the sword as a symbol of his martyrdom by decapitation. The chalice and snake held by St John the Evangelist symbolises the cup of poison he drank yet miraculously survived, according to Abdias. St James the Great often carries a scallop shell, referencing his shrine at Santiago de Compostela in Spain, a popular pilgrimage site. He became a pilgrim and at Gissing, the Victorian angel LN2 carries a pilgrim's staff and purse. St Andrew emphasised the redemptive power of the Cross in his preaching and was crucified; Baker notes that the saltire form of the cross may have been developed in representations to identify him more

[14] At Earl Stonham St Mary, the figure of St Catherine is identifiable with her wheel. To date, my impression is that female saints on wall-posts are less common than on painted screens, but this may be accounted for by iconoclasm. Given their popularity on screens, as at Litcham and North Elmham, and the visual clarity of their symbols, one might expect their representation to have been more widespread in wall-post niches.
[15] Duffy, in de Voragine 1993, p. xii.
[16] Parker 1493, quoted in Baker 2011, p. 69.

clearly.[17] These are the most important apostles, but they do not always appear in this order in medieval wall-post schemes, nor do they on the shields of the Victorian lower tier angels at Gissing.

The order of the other apostles is variable. St James the Less was clubbed to death with a fuller's club, so his emblem relates to his martyrdom. So does the saw of St Simon, who was reputedly sawn to death. St Philip should carry a cross reflecting stories from his life described in the 'Legenda Aurea', but holds a basket of loaves in most East Anglian representations, referencing his pastoral work as a deacon distributing food. St Thomas holds a spear or spears in local representations; it has been suggested that this may refer to the story of his doubt enacted in mystery plays, in which he placed his hand into Christ's wound made by a spear.[18] St Bartholomew's attribute is the flaying knife by which he was reputedly martyred. St Matthew gathered taxes, accounting for the purse on the Victorian shield of angel LS6 at Gissing, although his medieval attribute was usually the wide-sword supposedly used to kill him. The axe or axes of St Matthias also refer to the reputed manner of his execution.

Like the painted saints on many screens, arrangements of apostles and saints in wall-post schemes where they are identifiable (at Knapton and Emneth for example) do not tend to reflect an obvious order like the hierarchical display of the creed of the apostles. They may indicate the exercise of 'popular devotional preference' in communally-funded ventures.[19] Perhaps name-saints of individual roof donors were incorporated in some schemes, as in screens at Aylsham and North Burlingham. Some schemes included saints popular locally, such as Waltham and Dunstan, as found at Earl Stonham St Mary.[20] Such idiosyncratic decision-making would explain the diversity of wall-post schemes. They accommodated flexibility, signifying a general intercessory symbolism, in dialogue with angelic roof imagery and the iconography of painted glass, chancel screens and the Rood. I contend that the primary function of wall-post figures was to offer help and intercession to the laity, rather than to incorporate models of behaviour for the congregation.

The Gissing scheme was probably loosely imitative of the most refined wall-post programmes, as exemplified by that at St Mary Bury St Edmunds. Even though the rather crude carving of some of the figures at Gissing is restoration work, the quality of carving evident in the mutilated figures (and comparable work at Coddenham) is less sophisticated than that associated with such elite work.[21] The enveloping presence of a group of interchangeable intercessory figures was probably more important than their precise identity or order at Gissing, unlike those of a small group of the most elite inventive arrangements. This scheme probably paid homage to innovations in polished manifestations of the mode elsewhere. Nonetheless, that wall-post figures were included at all at Gissing was a deliberate and remarkable choice involving additional expense.

[17] Baker 2011, p. 70.
[18] Baker 2011, p. 70.
[19] Duffy 2005, p. 159. His discussion relates to screens, but the point seems apposite to wall-post imagery.
[20] St Walstan is also depicted on the chancel screen at St Catherine Ludham.
[21] To date, I have found a general correlation between quality of carving and innovation in angel roof schemes.

WPN1 collared wide-sleeved robe with straight crude drapery folds, hands in front, bisected; **replaced head and body**	WPS1 hat and **head replaced**; hands sheared away and attribute lost, remnants of drapery
WPN2 long wavy hair simply carved (**head replaced**), seated, with hands severed; wall-post over window and figure cut off at waist level	WPS2 close-fitted hat like scull-cap but **head is replacement**; seated and hands crossed at the waist, but evidence of iconoclasm; over window
WPN3 long wavy hair swept back; front and hands hacked off flat, no detail; **head probably replaced**	WPS3 hat but **head replaced**; seated; hands and item held sheared away but curving full drapery folds evident
WPN4 hands across the chest, crudely carved long hair, generic face, wall-post over window and cut off at elbow level; **replacement**	WPS4 long beard and wavy hair, fancy robe and turned-back wide cuffs, cut off knee height over window; **sharp edges of crude carving and standing pose indicate that head and body are replaced**
WPN5 long wavy hair; hands may be joined in prayer at waist height; **crisp edges of simple carving and standing pose suggest replacement work**	WPS5 wavy hair but **head replaced**; drapery folds and seated body are medieval; hands and attribute lost, hacked
WPN6 turban-like headwear and bearded, lost hands and attribute; appears seated	WPS6 hat and beard; lost front, appears seated, with fully articulated drapery folds
WPN7 **head replaced**; body seated and full curving drapery folds with foot or toe visible	WPS7 **head replaced**; holds scroll (apostle carrying clause of creed, or prophet?) and drapery folds curved in depth

Angelic Hierarchy

In the early sixth century, the theologian Pseudo-Dionysius wrote a treatise entitled De Coelesti Hierarchia ('Concerning the Celestial Hierarchy'), composing a list of different types of angels. Pseudo-Dionysius separated the nine angelic orders mentioned in scripture into three subdivisions; the first comprised Seraphim, Cherubim and Thrones, the second, Virtues, Dominations or Dominions and Principalities and the third, Powers, Archangels and Angels. The first order was described as the most elevated and equal union of transcendent divine beings, nearest to and with God. The second order 'suggests "ordained power"; thus the Dominions preside, the Virtues operate…and the Powers repel harmful forces', ordering the universe. Finally, the third order was most closely engaged with humanity.

Jacobus de Voragine, (author of the 'Legenda Aurea' or 'The Golden Legend') largely followed his account. Although this hierarchy did not directly influence iconography, it set the parameters for later development of angelic imagery in glass, painted screens and alabaster carvings. Lay understanding of the angelic orders was more likely to derive from others' interpretations of the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius and liturgical texts.[22] There is evidence that detailed knowledge of at least some of the orders was not widespread among the laity and some texts were generalised.

[22] Morgan, in Scholz, Rauch and Hess 2004, p. 212.

Wide-ranging descriptions of the seraphim and cherubim can be found in scriptural sources; they are referred to as six-winged and many-eyed in scripture; the Seraphim in Isaiah 6:2 and Cherubim also in Revelation 4:8 for example. In contrast, other angelic orders, whilst acknowledged, are not denoted in terms of specific qualities. It is unsurprising then that ambiguity and inconsistency characterises the representation of angelic orders in late medieval English parish churches.[23] Inscriptions could be used to aid identification of images, as in the painted rood or chancel screen at Barton Turf St Michael and All Angels, as there was such diversity in the iconography of the angelic orders.

Representations of roof angels with more than one pair of wings are rare, although they exist; examples are found at Cawston St Agnes, Carbrooke SS Peter and Paul and Emneth St Edmund for example, generally in feathered representations. Were these intended to represent cherubim or seraphim?[24] The amalgamation of the iconography of the seraphim and cherubim is found in representations from early Christian art and a similar ambiguity characterises their representation in late medieval East Anglian churches. The single pair of wings as at Gissing is much more typical; as the presence of roof angels would have supported a widely-held view that angelic beings were united with humans in the offering of praise, it seems appropriate that these 'co-worshippers' might be represented as angels or archangels, as the lower orders were seen as closer to humanity.[25]

Lowest tier beam-end angelic carvings

Note that all of these are Victorian restoration replacements by Phipson 1876-77. Deliberate damage to carvings prior to late nineteenth-century renovation seems to have been confined to the wall-post figures and the most accessible angelic representations. Phipson's specification lists the restoration and reaffixing of the 'present angels (9 at present)' and provision of '5 new to correspond'. Fourteen new winged angels were to be created and attached at the ends of the lower hammer-beams, 'to be carved with emblems and shields and other devices and positions as shall be directed hereafter and to sketches.'[26]

These Victorian replacement demi-angels are larger than their medieval counterparts above and their appearance is quite different. Their attire possibly comprises feathered suits with tippets, but the interpretation is bolder and heavier than medieval angels in this costume, as at Emneth. They rest on folds of stylised clouds, the leaves, flowers and fruit represented at their bases reminiscent of some of the Victorian imagery at Knapton. These designs are more elaborate than at Coddenham, but the faces and the crisp carving of saints' emblems on the shields are not dissimilar.

Each of these Phipson angels holds a shield adorned crisply with the initials and corresponding emblems of the twelve apostles, with the exception of two at the centre charged with sacred monograms, LS3 (M) and LN4 (IHS). This scheme was pure Victorian invention; the wall-post figures would have already sustained the vandalism that removed their attributes, they do not appear to have represented the same arrangement as the shield symbols and apostolic schemes did not follow

[23] Nigel Morgan identifies 17 extant representations in England, across media from glass and screens to alabaster.
[24] As Peers 2001, p. 49 observes, 'neither the number of wings nor even the presence and absence of wings can be relied upon for general identification.'
[25] See Keck 1998, p. 37 and p. 39.
[26] DN/CON 144/7/1-9, p. 10.

a standard order in medieval roof designs. However, the emblems are a useful reminder for visitors of the attributes of saints, some of which could have been depicted in the wall-post scheme.

LN1 St Peter, crossed keys	LS1 St Thomas, crossed spears
LN2 St James the Great, pilgrim's staff and wallet	LS2 St John the Evangelist, chalice and snake
LN3 St Andrew, cross saltire	LS3 Sacred monogram M representing the Virgin Mary
LN4 Sacred monogram HIS, representing Jesus Christ, or Jesus Hominum Salvator, 'Jesus Saviour of Man'	LS4 St James the Less, fuller's club
LN5 St Bartholomew, flaying knife	LS5 St Mathias, crossed axes
LN6 St Philip, basket with loaves	LS6 St Matthew, purse
LN7 St Simon, crossed saws	LS7 St Paul, sword

Upper tier beam-end angelic carvings

Attire

These angelic carvings appear to be medieval; US2 is the only obvious Victorian replacement. More than one hand has carved these angels. Those at the east and west ends are medieval, but darkened, presumably as they are adjacent to damp walls. The wings are all replacements. The demi-angels are crowned and have flowing hair. Crowned angels are found elsewhere; at Knapton and at March some wear diadems with a cross at the centre, as in stained glass designs at Harpley and at Norwich St Peter Hungate.

The angels' eyes appear closed or undefined, although they could have been painted. They wear varied ecclesiastical dress, with an indeterminate cloud design beneath in some but not all cases, unlike at Grundisburgh. In many schemes, including those influenced by the roof at King's Lynn St Nicholas Chapel, roof angels wear albs and amices, the attire of acolytes assisting at the Mass. The variety of ecclesiastical dress at Gissing may suggest a more complex differentiation of roles, although the carving lacks detail, the carvings are diminutive and a more generic impression is formed by the naked eye from the ground. In their attire, the angels appear to be represented as concelebrants at the Mass. However, they do not carry Mass emblems, unlike the larger beam angels depicted in more clearly articulated processional costume at Bury St Edmunds St Mary.

Attributes

In fact, the attributes held by the upper-tier beam-end angels at Gissing are rather a mixed ensemble, compared to those in the most innovatory roof schemes, as at St Nicholas King's Lynn, March St Wendreda, Norwich St Peter Hungate or Bury St Edmunds St Mary. With a couple of important exceptions, their precise order at Gissing seems to have been less important than the inclusion of generic emblems, just as chancel screen panel images were characterised by generalised symmetry and some flexibility in their internal arrangement.

Shields

Roof angels with shields are not uncommon; there are some in the double hammer-beam roofs at Knapton SS Peter and Paul and at March. Shields could carry heraldic motifs, as at Norwich St Giles and at Blythburgh Holy Trinity, or ecclesiastical emblems such as the Arma Christi, as at West Walton St Mary. Like those at Norwich St Peter Mancroft, the other blank shields at Gissing derive from a tradition exemplified by one of three copper-gilt and enamel plaques from Warden Abbey (c 1377–97), now in the British Museum. They are unlike Richard II's beam angels carrying enormous carved heraldic shields at Westminster Hall. At Gissing, these angelic shields frame the east and west ends of the nave. We do not know if they were always blank or carried painted motifs. Phipson's specification orders the removal of 'all paint and whitewash etc. on any old timbers used' in the renovation of the chancel roof at Gissing, yet there is no reference to pigment or colour in his discussion of plans for the nave roof.[27]

The most intriguing and unusual attribute of the scheme is arguably the jousting shield or ecranche, with a hole for a lance, held by angel US1 at the south-east end. This motif reappears in spandrel s SUNW2 and SCNE6 and appears to reference the Kemp name. According to the antiquarian Francis Blomefield,

'The name Kemp is derived from the Saxon word to kemp or combat, which in Norfolk is retained to this day, a foot-ball match being called camping or kemping; and thus in Saxon a kempen signifies a combatant, a champion, or man of arms'.[28]

Pax and book

UN3 and US3 face each other carrying a Pax and a book respectively. This may be a deliberate pairing. The Pax was the sole vehicle through which the lay congregation had physical connection with the activity of the priest during the Mass in the late medieval period. Once the priest had kissed the tablet, it was passed to an acolyte who brought it to the congregation to receive in turn and to kiss in hierarchical order according to social status and gender. The juxtaposition of the Pax and the book is found in several angel roofs further west, as at King's Lynn St Nicholas and Mildenhall St Mary. It is interesting that it is repeated in the double hammer-beam roof type at Gissing. I propose that the N/S pairing of the book and the Pax here and in a number of other nave roofs directly augmented the message of the crucifixion presented to the congregation by the Rood, the book representing the Gospels in witness of the sacrifice and the Pax referencing the Eucharistic meaning of crucifixion. The Pax seems to have been a signifier of the active engagement of the laity in the Eucharist in angel roofs; in schemes where the angels hold Mass emblems, it is often paired N/S with the chalice and Host.

Symbols of Christ's Passion

UN2 holds the Crown of Thorns and a hammer. It is unusual and perhaps unique for the Crown of Thorns to be combined with other imagery in this way and the hammer is usually shown with the nails used to crucify Christ. The shield of US2 cannot be trusted, as it is restoration work; we cannot be certain about the medieval carving it replaced or its relationship with UN2 opposite. However, US4 also carries Passion imagery. The sword used by Peter to cut off the ear of Malchus, the high

[27] DN/CON 144/7/1-9, p. 10.
[28] Blomefield 1805, pp. 162-181.

priest's servant at the betrayal of Christ appears in some other roof schemes; I have not seen another depiction of the severed ear on a stick in this context and scrutiny from scaffolding would be instructive regarding this object.[29] In conjunction with the (now lost) Rood, such emblems functioned to embrace the congregation in the prospect of redemption and eternal Paradise through Christ's sacrifice.

Musical and Passion emblems

UN6 carries a wind instrument (possibly a shawm) and appears to be the only angelic musician in the Gissing scheme. Musical roof angels are combined with others which hold symbols of Christ's Passion at the ends of some of the lower hammer-beams in the double hammer-beam roof at Knapton SS Peter and Paul. These musical and Passion attributes recall those represented in the more substantial angelic beam carvings at King's Lynn St Nicholas Chapel, which influenced other schemes in the west of the region, as at Mildenhall St Mary and Emneth St Edmund. The Angel Choir at Lincoln Cathedral provides a precedent for the combined representation of angels as musicians, bearers of the Instruments of the Passion and signifiers of redemption and Paradise. This earlier, elite scheme resonated locally in the East of England.

At the conclusion of the Sanctus, as parishioners prayed that they might join its eternal chant with the company of heaven, musical roof angels directed them to hear their celestial chorus, evoking Paradise where the redeemed would be received by Christ. As Rastall proposes, medieval angelic song was believed to echo the earthly liturgy. Mortal refrains imitated the angelic 'laudes dei', or sung praise of God, which was viewed as the 'proper activity of all angels.'[30] The hymn of ceaseless praise of God by the seraphim in Isaiah's vision of heaven was reflected in the liturgy; close to the opening of the Te deum laudamus and in the Preface of the Mass:

'Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Hosts. Heaven and earth are full of thy glory…'

Yet the musical activity depicted in angelic roof carvings did not represent a literal reflection of music making in the church below. Parish church music was primarily vocal, with little, if any, use of instruments aside from the organ, whereas musical roof angels always carry instruments. The expressions of singing angels could be sensitively rendered in paintings, as in Jan and Hubert van Eyck's 'Adoration of the Mystic Lamb' (known as the Ghent Altarpiece) dated 1432, but might have lacked visual clarity in lofty roof carvings.

Debate surrounded the nature and perception of angelic music. Although angelic song was viewed as beyond description to human beings by Rolle and Hilton, a tradition of heavenly music derived from scriptural sources and (like those in more localised sites in glass) musical roof angels appear to have suggested the celestial Paradise into which those redeemed would be received by Christ.

Mitre

The ceremonial headdress of bishops known as the mitre appears in several angel roofs, held by angels in varied positions. The most elaborate and detailed depiction of this motif is in the extraordinarily sophisticated single hammer-beam roof Norwich St Peter Hungate; other

[29] The incident is described in John chapter 18, verse 10.
[30] Rastall, in Davidson 1994, pp. 163-7.

representations are generally simpler, as at Knapton and Necton, but the tagine-like form at Gissing is particularly cursory. Sometimes this emblem appears in schemes representing objects used in processions at an episcopal Mass, such as censers and chalices, as at Bury St Edmunds St Mary and Necton. This is not the case at Gissing. It does not seem to refer to the patronage of the roof. It may symbolise the office of the bishop, signalling orthodoxy and adherence to the Church. Alternatively, it may represent a token reference to the Mass, or it may simply represent the appropriation and imitation of this emblem from such a scheme elsewhere.

Unidentified objects

The identities of the objects held by US5 are uncertain. In its left hand, the angel holds a slim item, possibly part of a stick or taper. In the right hand, the angel holds the side of a horizontal (possibly ridged) object, which rests against its body and almost seems to wrap around it to the left. There is a hole above, suggesting possible loss of part of the attribute. Its form led to a previous suggestion that it could be a loaf of bread, but I know of no other example of such an attribute in an angelic representation in any medium. The basket of loaves is used to denote St Philip in wall-post schemes. In other roofs, angelic carvings can carry incense boats/carriers, as at Bury St Edmunds. At Emneth, a pair of angels carries rectangular objects against their bodies which appear to be reliquary boxes. The Gissing object appears rather more organic or curved in form; close observation from scaffolding might confirm whether it might represent a vessel associated with the Mass or with the Passion.

UN1 Blank shield	US1 Blank jousting shield or ecranche, with hole for lance, referencing Kemp name
UN2 Crown of thorns and hammer	US2 **Victorian replacement**: blank shield
UN3 Pax	US3 Open book on rectangular background
UN4 Open book	US4 Sword and possibly severed ear on stick
UN5 Blank shield	US5 Unsure; horizontal band against body with loss/hole above and item (stick/taper?) in left hand
UN6 Wind instrument (shawm?)	US6 Mitre
UN7 Blank shield	US7 Blank shield

Spandrel carvings of arch-braces to lower hammer-beams facing E and W

Kemp imagery

A distinctive feature of the Gissing roof is the representation of the wheat garbs or sheaves of Kemp heraldry in some of the spandrels.[31] The only representation in the lowest brace spandrels is SLSW5,

[31] Mourin 2004. 'Kemp: Gules three Garbs within a Bordure engrailed Or.'
Hitchin-Kemp 1902 https://archive.org/stream/generalhistoryof00kemp/generalhistoryof00kemp_djvu.txt [accessed 15 April 2017]. 'According to popular etymology, Kemp and Kempe are modern English forms of the Anglo-Saxon Cempa, a soldier. Whether the name means soldier or field of contest (for which view there is strong evidence) its Saxon derivation is undisputed…A fact which was not mentioned in the chapter on the derivation of the name is the designation " Kemping " applied to competitions among reapers in the harvest field. This usage is found both in the south of Scotland and East Anglia, and probably in other parts of the country. Its history has not been traced, but if it proved to have existed, as in all probability it did, earlier than the custom of distinguishing families by heraldic arms it would account for the adoption of the three sheaves in the Kempe coat. The country folk in the eastern counties speak of the best sheaves in a field as 'Battle'

but the motif is repeated in the brace spandrels to the upper beam and collar-beam braces. Some representations are clearer than others; what Haward describes as a 'thistle' is probably also a wheatsheaf.[32]

Representations of blank ridged shields with leaves are found in all three tiers of brace spandrels, but the most interesting and unusual are the jousting shields of SUNW2, SUSW5 and SCNE6. Like the shield of angel US1, these appear to reference the Kemp name.

Dolphin/fish

Another unusual representation is found at the south-west end. SLSE7 is especially intriguing. It depicts a dolphin or large fish eating a fish. Nichols cites the association of the dolphin motif in textiles with a fishmonger at St Gregory Norwich and with members of fishery trades more generally, but the connotation at Gissing is unclear.[33] The motif of a fish eating another is also found within a very diverse and sophisticated scheme at Bury St Edmunds St Mary.

Foliate heads and natural forms

Foliate designs and leaves are found in the carved spandrels of many roofs, including at Knapton, Kersey St Mary and Ipswich St Margaret. Most spandrel carvings take this form. They fit the spandrel shape neatly. At Gissing in SUSE4, an unusual design shows leaves emerging from a pot. The pomegranate motif also appears, probably symbolising the Resurrection. Foliate heads also appear; those at Gissing are less developed or detailed than those at Bury St Edmunds St Mary or Earl Stonham St Mary, but they are still noteworthy. Haward observes that 'such a combination of man or beast with natural plant growth from pagan prehistory presents us with a challenging range of deep meanings.'[34] The protruding tongue is another element subject to diverse possible interpretations, including the representation of death or 'disrespect for an adversary or authority'.

SLNW1 leaves with foliate motif	SLSW1 leaves with foliate motif
SLNE2 leaves with foliate motif	SLSE2 leaves with foliate motif
SLNW2 leaves with foliate motif	SLSW2 leaves with foliate motif
SLNE3 leaves with foliate motif	SLSE3 leaves with foliate motif
SLNW3 leaves with foliate motif	SLSW3 leaves projecting from a foliate head with protruding tongue
SLNE4 leaves projecting from foliate head with protruding tongue	SLSE4 leaves with foliate motif
SLNW4 ridged shield with leaves	SLSW4 leaves with foliate motif
SLNE5 leaves with foliate motif	SLSE5 ridged shield with leaves
SLNW5 indeterminate leaves etc.	SLSW5 leaves with wheatsheaf (Kemp)
SLNE6 leaves with foliate motif	SLSE6 unclear
SLNW6 cursory leaf/foliate design	SLSW6 ridged shield with leaves
SLNE7 acorn and leaves	SLSE7 Dolphin or large fish eating a fish

sheaves, from the belief that where human blood has been shed the corn grows more luxuriantly. Whatever sense the invention of the arms ascribed to the name the appropriateness of the sheaves is obvious'.

[32] Haward 1999, p. 93.

[33] Nichols 2002, p. 273.

[34] Haward 1999, p. 8.

Spandrel carvings of arch-braces to upper hammer-beams facing E and W

Many of the spandrels at this level and above are especially difficult to see with the naked eye and identification has often required a monocular and a torch.

SUNW1 ridged shield with leaves	SUSW1 wheat sheaf or garb (Kemp)or thistle
SUNE2 wheat sheaf or garb (Kemp)	SUSE2 ridged shield with leaves
SUNW2 jousting shield with wheatsheaf and leaves (Kemp)	SUSW2 ridged shield with leaves
SUNE3 ridged shield with leaves	SUSE3 leaves emerging from sheaf or plant form
SUNW3 wheatsheaf (Kemp)and natural forms	SUSW3 wheatsheaf or natural forms
SUNE4 wheat sheaf or garb (Kemp)	SUSE4 pot with leaves
SUNW4 wheatsheaf (Kemp) and leaves	SUSW4 ridged shield with leaves
SUNE5 shield with cross	SUSE5 ridged shield with leaves
SUNW5 ridged shield	SUSW5 jousting shield with wheatsheaf and leaves (Kemp)
SUNE6 ridged shield with leaves	SUSE6 ridged shield with leaves
SUNW6 very poorly defined, barely carved	SUSW6 wheatsheaf or natural forms
SUNE7 wheatsheaf (Kemp)with leaves	SUSE7 ridged shield with leaves

Spandrel carvings of arch-braces to collar-beams facing E and W

The carving is particularly shallow and cursory in places at this level. Those left plain and uncarved at the east end (SCN/SW5) are particularly difficult to view from the nave.

SCNW1 ridged shield and leaves	SCSW1 blank shield with leaves
SCNE2 plain and uncarved	SCSE2 plain and uncarved
SCNW2 pomegranate or foliate design with leaves	SCSW2 ridged shield and leaves
SCNE3 ridged shield and leaves	SCSE3 blank shield with leaves
SCNW3 ridged shield and leaves	SCSW3 ridged shield and cursory leaves
SCNE4 ridged shield and leaves	SCSE4 blank shield with leaves
SCNW4 wheatsheaf (Kemp) or thistle and leaves	SCSW4 pomegranate
SCNE5 wheat sheaf (Kemp) or thistle or pomegranate	SCSE5 ridged shield with leaves
SCNW5 poorly defined leaves	SCSW5 sheaf or foliate design?
SCNE6 jousting shield with leaves	SCSE6 foliate centre with cursory leaves, roughly carved
SCNW6 plain and uncarved	SCSW6 plain and uncarved

SCNE7 wheat sheaf (Kemp)	SCSE7 wheat sheaf (Kemp)or thistle and cursory leaves

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