

OAK FURNITURE IN NORFOLK, 1530–1640

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Norfolk's period of greatest prosperity 'came with the time of Edward III and remained to the end of the Middle Ages'.¹ That it did not immediately decline thereafter can be seen in the lavish manner in which her churches were furnished in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. It is therefore surprising that this material, which survives in such plentiful quantities, has not hitherto been systematically studied to distinguish some decorative preferences characteristic of this still self-contained region and to assess the degree to which Norfolk joiners were influenced by continental fashions. In addition, Norfolk having been the birthplace of many joiners who made their way across the Atlantic in the seventeenth century, it may be possible incidentally to throw some light on the stylistic origins of some furniture made in New England.² These therefore are the aims of this article, which is based on photographic tours undertaken more than ten years ago. Readers hoping for minute analysis of timber stock sizes and measuring systems personal to now completely anonymous joiners will undoubtedly be disappointed and should perhaps read no further.

If they do persevere, however, they will find a wealth of fixed woodwork with carved ornament, much of it bearing a date. I have concentrated on this body of work in the belief that fixtures provide a relatively secure framework for the attribution and dating of movable furniture, which is still generally attributed and dated using long-established, not to say archaic (and amateur) formulae. I was surprised to find that there are a significant number of movables surviving in Norfolk which also bear a date, and I have included the most interesting of these as well, as they can be astonishingly early.³

East Anglia, as has been pointed out by Sir Nikolaus Pevsner and by H. Munro Cautley before him, is exceptionally rich in churches — there is one for every 1,850 acres, on average, and there are 659 churches dating before 1700 in Norfolk alone. Their Elizabethan furnishings are, in Pevsner's words, 'ample, but rarely spectacular'. He then gives the following list of dated pulpits (which is not comprehensive), beginning with Catton, dated 1537, and continuing with Beeston 1592, North Elmham 1614–26, Moulton St Mary 1619, Walpole St Peter 1620, Thwaite, 1624, Wiggenhall St Germans 1631, Thornham 1631, Edingthorpe 1632, Necton 1636, and Aylsham 1637. If other dated fixtures are included, such as the reading desk at Edingthorpe 1587, woodwork at Wilby 1633, Little Barningham 1640, screens at St Margaret, King's Lynn, 1584 and after 1603, and Tilney All Saints 1618, it becomes evident that there is not only a considerable corpus of dated material but also that it all belongs to the first half of the seventeenth century or earlier. Taking into account fixed woodwork in domestic buildings, such as Blickling (1616–27) and elsewhere, and adding the dated movables, it is feasible to treat the subject of Norfolk furniture and woodwork chronologically, which will afford an insight into the acceptance of new forms and styles during the later sixteenth and earlier seventeenth centuries.

The Renaissance came early to Norfolk as a result of the county's trade with the Low Countries. A standing cupboard at Strangers' Hall in Norwich was made for Nicholas

Sotherton who bought the Hall in 1509; although uncarved, it is clearly classical rather than gothic in inspiration and was probably made by one of the many 'stranger artificers' living in Norwich.⁴ The remarkable terracotta tombs of the Bedingfeld family in Oxburgh church, which date from c. 1525, together with those at five other Norfolk locations and at Barsham church in Suffolk and Layer Marney Hall in Essex are certainly by a foreigner and were probably commissioned from a Fleming living in the county.⁵ In woodwork, Italianate details are visible in the panelling from Coe's house, Norwich, which may date from the 1520s,⁶ and dominate panels with the arms of John Sotherton of Norwich (d. 1557), which are close in style to panelling now at Holywells, Ipswich, and may date from the 1530s.⁷ In church woodwork, the pulpit at Catton, dated 1537, combines traditional linenfold panels with innovative balusters. The same moment of incipient stylistic change is represented in movable furniture by an extraordinary table (Fig. 1) which has a frieze pierced with cusped tracery and carved with leaf spandrels, combined with baluster legs crudely carved with leaves and renaissance foliage: these legs were clearly intended only to be seen from the front and are unconvincing essays in the new style — it is almost as if the whole thing had been copied from some two-dimensional source. The table bears an inscription from the first prayer book of Edward VI, dating it to the years 1549–52. One other table has a pierced frieze of simpler type, otherwise no further examples can be assigned such an early post-reformation date.

The successful assimilation, in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, of classicism whether in its purer Italian form, as in the dated table, or in a modified northern European, specifically Antwerp form was undoubtedly due either to actual contact with foreign joiners or to the influence of printed pattern books which proliferated at this time. Contacts with foreign joiners might take place in the Low Countries or indeed in East Anglia itself, as joiners fled from persecution in their own country. Of Norwich itself, William White recorded that in '1574, the town was so full of *Protestant refugees* from France and the Netherlands, that the bailiffs published an edict forbidding the influx of any more of these foreigners, many of whom were ingenious artisans, and by settling in Norwich and its neighbourhood, greatly improved the staple manufactures of this county'.⁸ An interesting example of continental influence is a table having elegant baluster legs consisting of fluted cups and gadrooned covers (Fig. 2); scrolled brackets support the plain frieze whose centres, on each of the longer sides, have a semicircular pendant, one carved with the initials IS and the inscription DEUM TIME 1577 (Fig. 3). Searching for comparably-styled tables in the county has proved that, while the elongated cup and cover turned leg was employed — and perhaps belongs to the late sixteenth century — it is rarely found fluted or gadrooned. One somewhat similar table omits the carving on the brackets and has no pendants whatsoever. The 1577 table apparently pre-dates the publication in Antwerp of Jan Vredeman de Vries's *Differents pourtraicts de menuiserie* (which probably appeared in the mid-1580s) otherwise it would have been tempting to see the top right-hand design in Figure 5 as a possible source — clearly Vredeman was publicising a contemporary Franco-Italianate furniture style in this design. Another table (Fig. 4), which is regrettably undated, shows the influence of the more characteristically Netherlandish designs in the same plate: the six square-section baluster legs, of typical mannerist tapering pedestal form, are carved with strapwork in low relief and have vestigial Ionic capitals. The stretchers have a guilloche variant inside and out but the decoration of the frieze is English, with paired scrolls. Although this table could well

date from the end of the sixteenth century the second quarter of the seventeenth century is equally possible, for there seems to have been a strong revival (if such it was) of mannerist influence at that time.

We should now turn our attention to some more examples of dated Elizabethan woodwork. Chronologically, the simple benches in the porch at Billingford, dated 1579, come first, but somewhat more significant, stylistically, is the screen at St Margaret's, King's Lynn, carved with the initials LR and the date 1584. The lowest of the three registers (Fig. 6) has blind round-arched panels framed by simply-fluted stiles, but the registers above have tapering fluted pilasters supporting scrolled brackets of a strongly mannerist character. An overmantel at Breccles Hall, dated 1587 in a cartouche enclosed in a round arch between broad fluted pilasters, is evidence of a classicising spirit in the county during the later years of Elizabeth's reign; and the reading desk at Edingthorpe, of the same date, also has a band of simple fluting. Although somewhat minor works in themselves, the carved friezes of some benches at Brisley church give a clear picture of some alternative patterns used in or about 1590, the date carved on one of the top rails, and they are moreover of the highest quality: this is most apparent, perhaps, in the stopped fluting (Fig. 7) which is beautifully regular, but is equally present in panels carved with lunettes and with a double-guilloche (Fig. 8). The latter is specially interesting for it provides incontrovertible evidence of the influence of the Italian architect and theorist, Sebastiano Serlio. This is not the place to attempt to summarise the very great influence of his books of architecture, whose publication began with Book 4 in Venice in 1537: suffice it to say that his plates were amongst the most influential of all printed designs during the sixteenth century. This frieze panel is one of several pieces of carving which almost certainly depend on Fol. 71R in the 1611 English edition, Figure 9. The pilasters supporting an overmantel at Strangers Hall, Norwich, apparently dating from the ownership of Francis Cock from 1627 (Fig. 10), have virtually identical double-guilloche, as has a chair with a top rail which projects beyond the back-posts (Fig. 12).

Preoccupation with the classical orders of architecture, which may have followed the publication of treatises and pattern-books by Hans Blum (*Quinque columnarum exacta descriptio atque delineatione*, Zurich, 1550), Andrea Palladio (1570) and Vredeman de Vries (*Architectura*, Antwerp, 1577), and later Robert Peake's English edition of Serlio (1611), is expressed in several examples of fixed woodwork. The pulpit at Beeston is typical (Fig. 13) and is dated 1592. It consists of arches — in this case segmental rather than semicircular — supported on fluted pilasters, framing plain panels. The somewhat similar pulpit at Weavenham All Saints, with scrolled brackets beneath the bottom rail may be slightly earlier. The simplicity of this design remained attractive to joiners over a longish period. It is the basis of the arched panels of a door, dated 1605, at Catfield (Fig. 11), and can be found with variations at least until the middle of the seventeenth century, and doubtless beyond. The elaborate pulpit at Cley-next-the-Sea (Fig. 14), dated 1611 but unfortunately lacking its back-board and sounding-board, represents the most architectonic of designs, but still incorporates round-headed arches in the main register, separated by paired columns; in the 'attic' storey, horizontal panels (separated by scrolled brackets) are subdivided into still smaller panels, though this was unusually achieved by carving in the solid rather than by using applied mouldings. The extensive use of mitred mouldings seems to have been taken over directly from the Low Countries. One of the earliest instances



1. Table, datable 1549–52, detail

2. Table, dated 1577

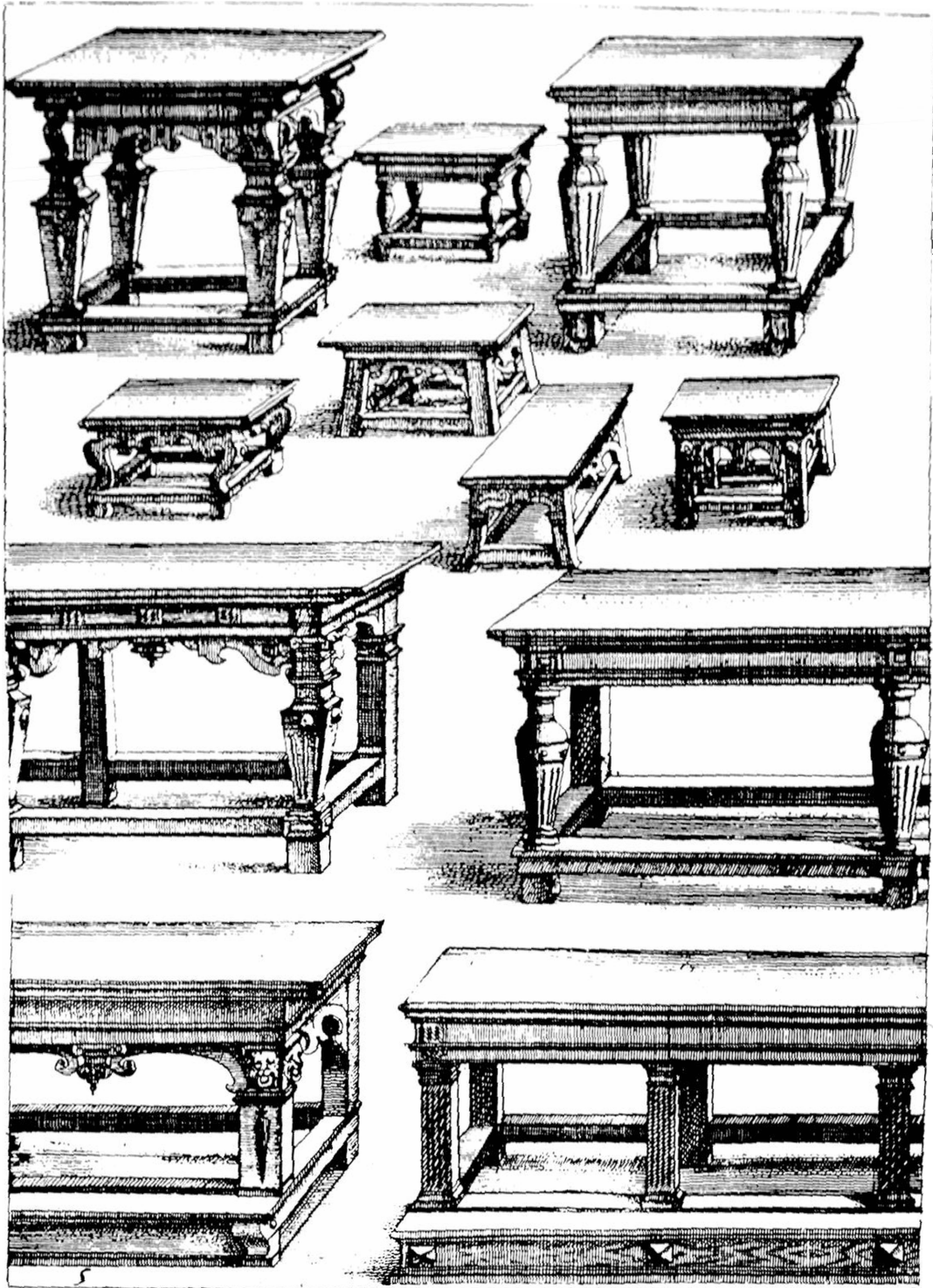




3. Detail of 2, showing the initials IS and the inscription DEUM TIME 1577



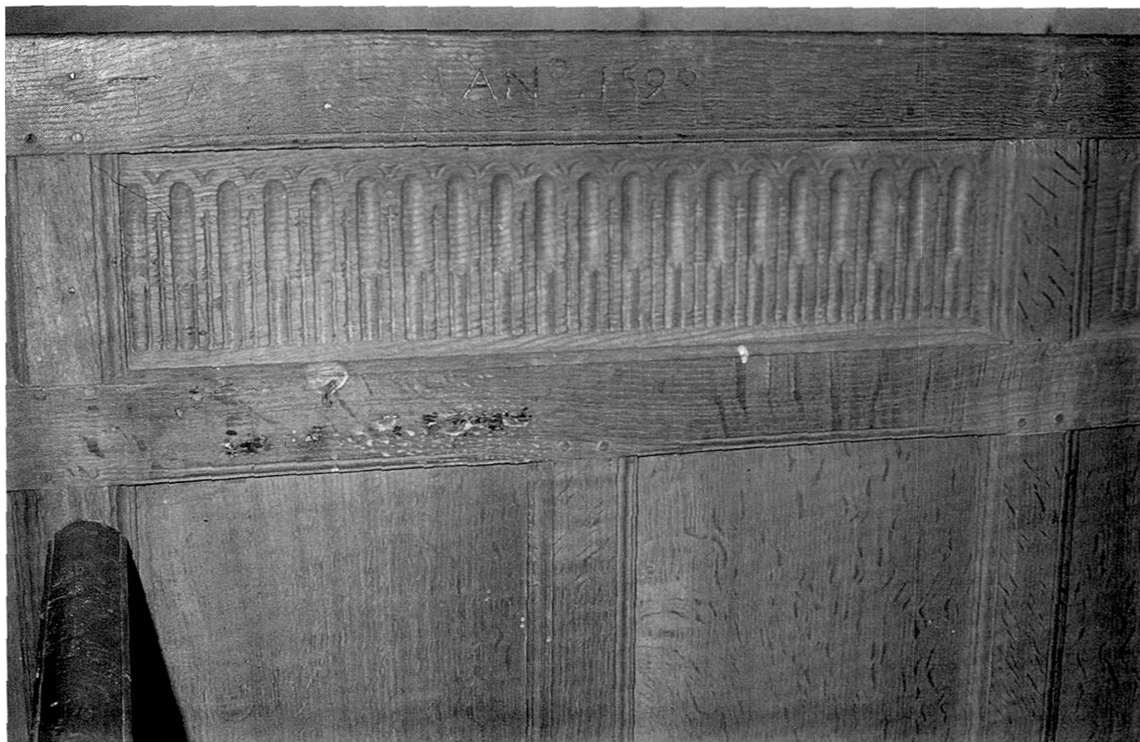
4. Table, perhaps late sixteenth century or 1630s



5. Jan Vredeman de Vries, *Differents pourtraicts de menuiserie*, Antwerp, 1580s,
plate 5



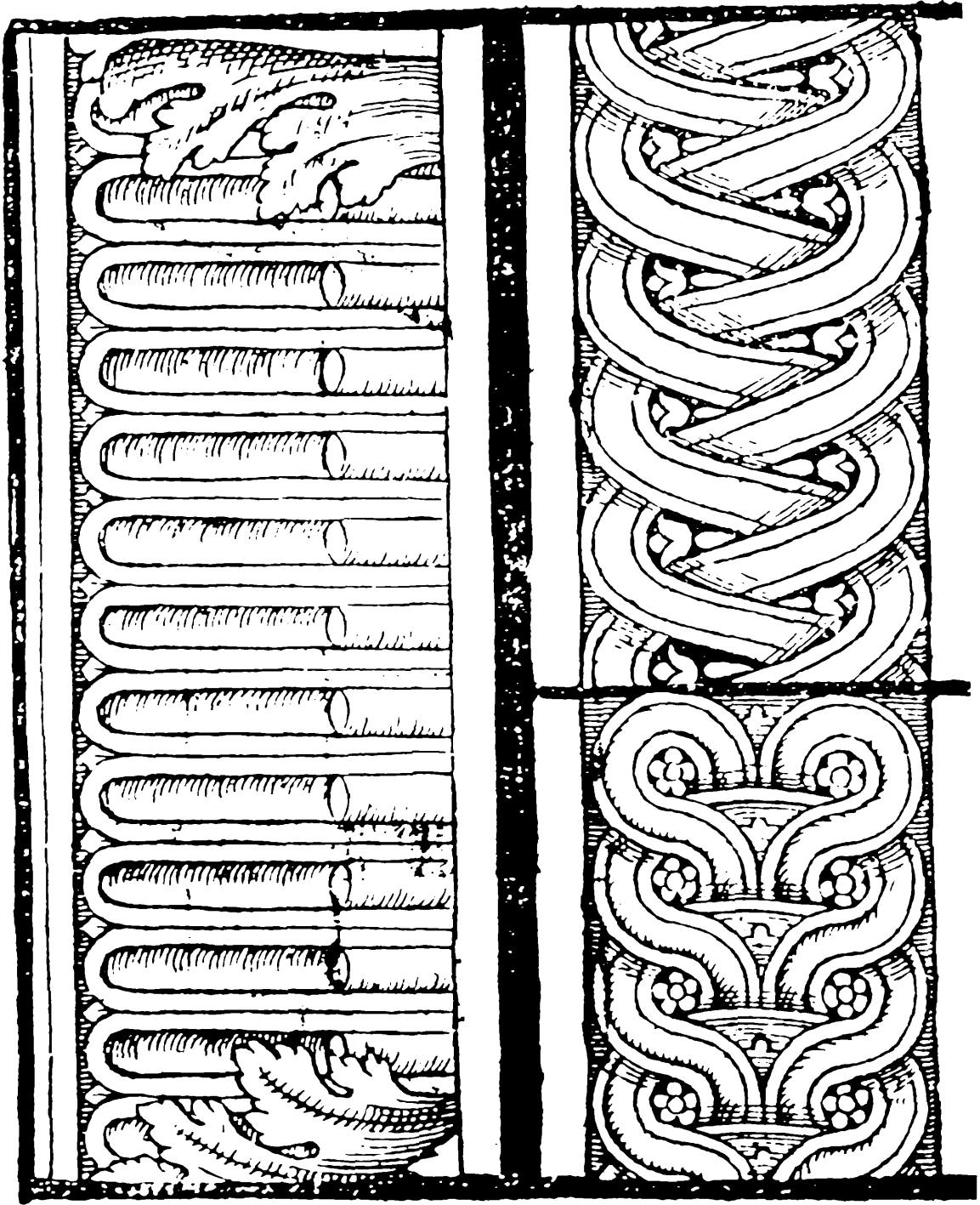
6. Screen at St Margaret's, King's Lynn, carved with the initials LR and the date 1584



7. Panelling at Brisley Church, c. 1590



8. Panelling at Brisley Church



9. Sebastiano Serlio, *Architettura*, Book IV, Fol. 71R in the 1611 English edition



10. Stranger's Hall, Norwich: pilasters and overmantel, perhaps dating from 1627



11. Door at Catfield, dated 1605



12. Chair, perhaps c. 1600



13. Pulpit at Beeston dated 1592, with later alterations



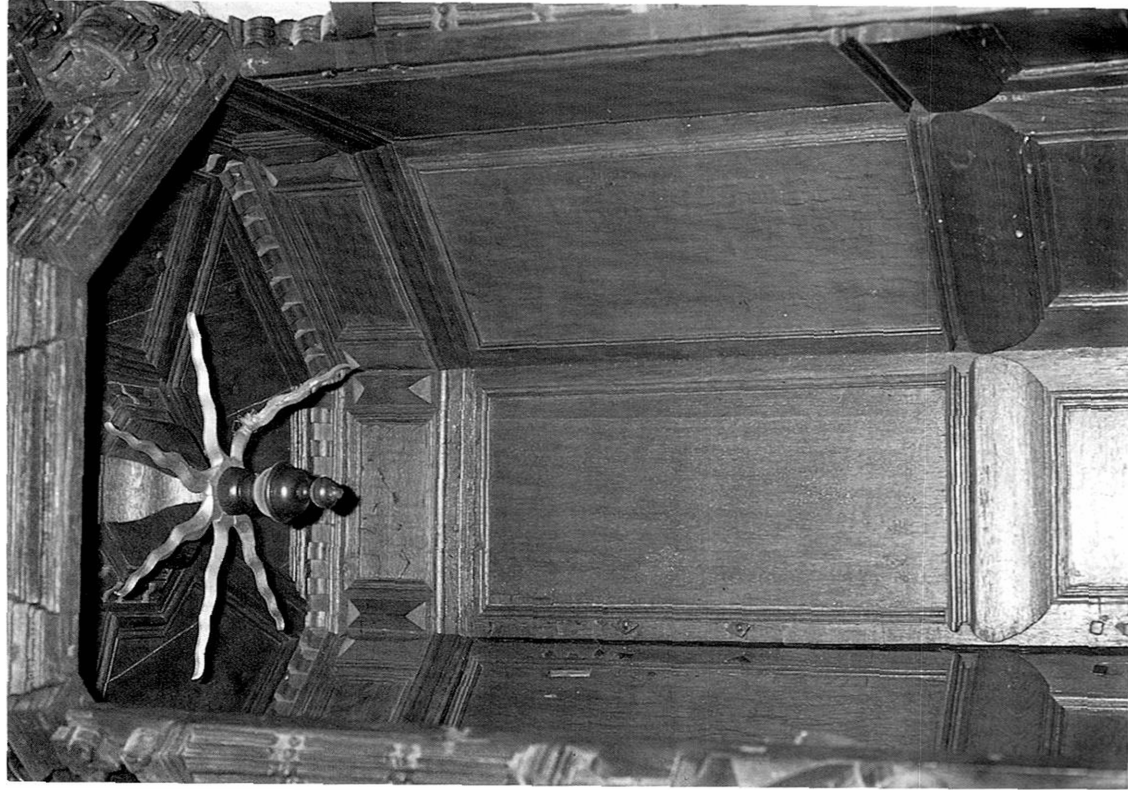
14. Pulpit at Cley-next-the-Sea dated 1611



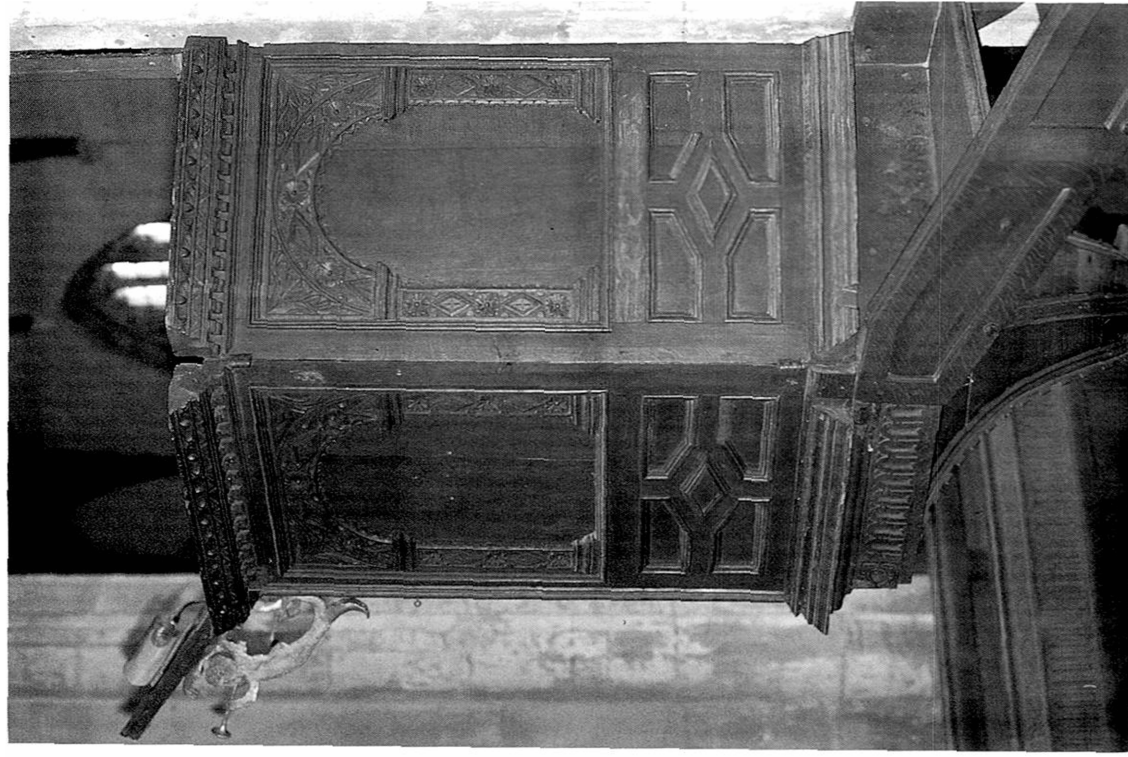
15. Walpole St Peter, font cover



16. Walpole St Peter, font cover



17. Walpole St Peter, font cover, interior



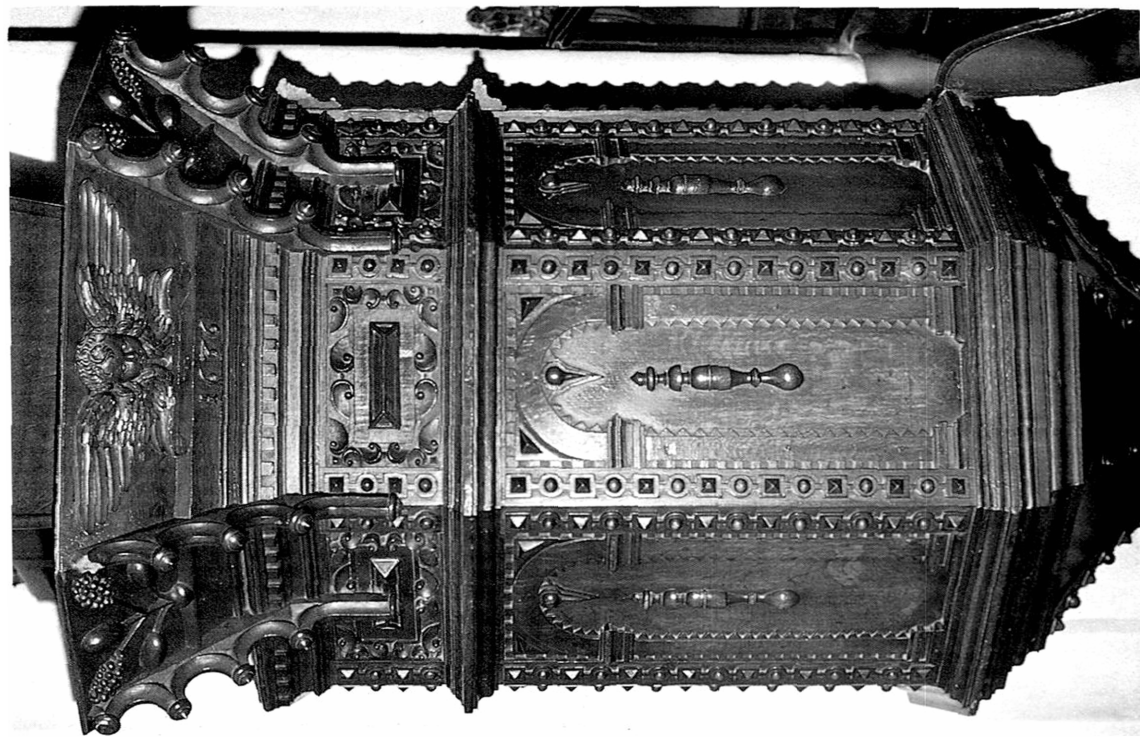
18. Walpole St Peter, pulpit, 1620



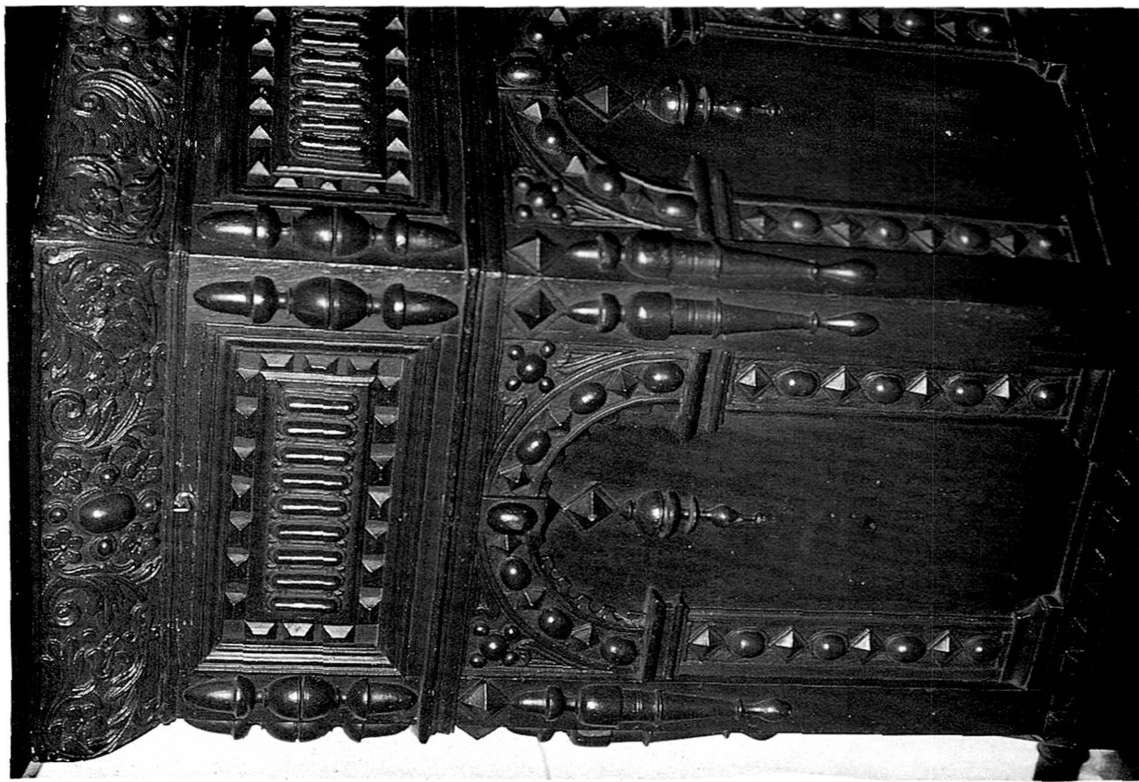
19. Walpole St Peter, sounding-board of pulpit



20. Pulpit at Loddon, perhaps 1620s



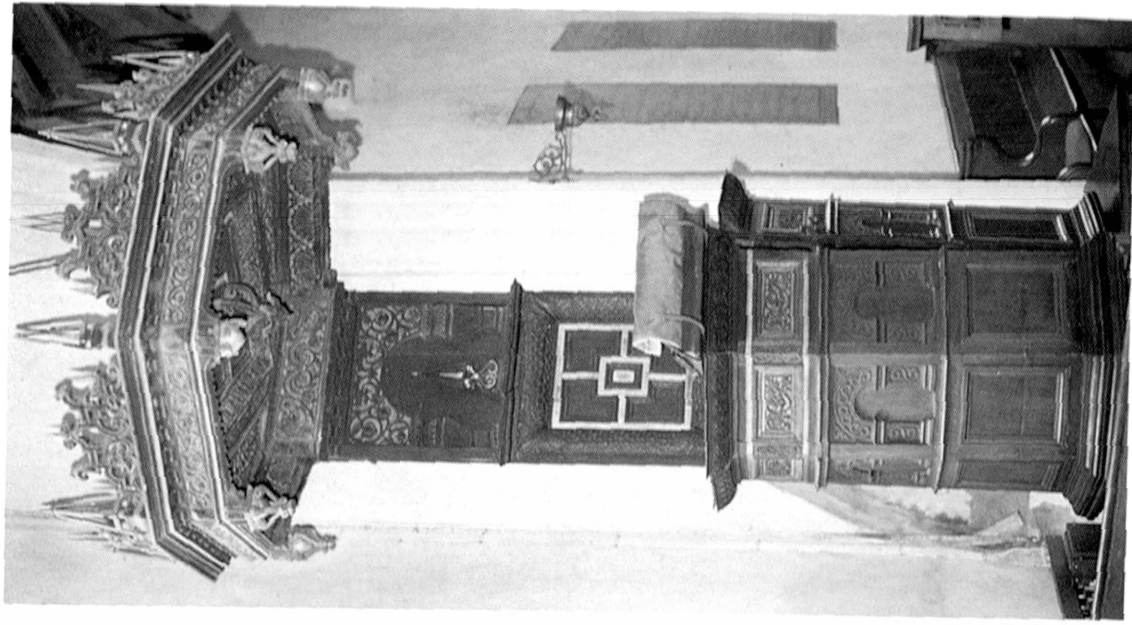
21. Pulpit at Necton, 1636, with later alterations



22. Pulpit at Roydon



23. Pulpit at Wickington



24. Pulpit at Tibenham, c. 1635



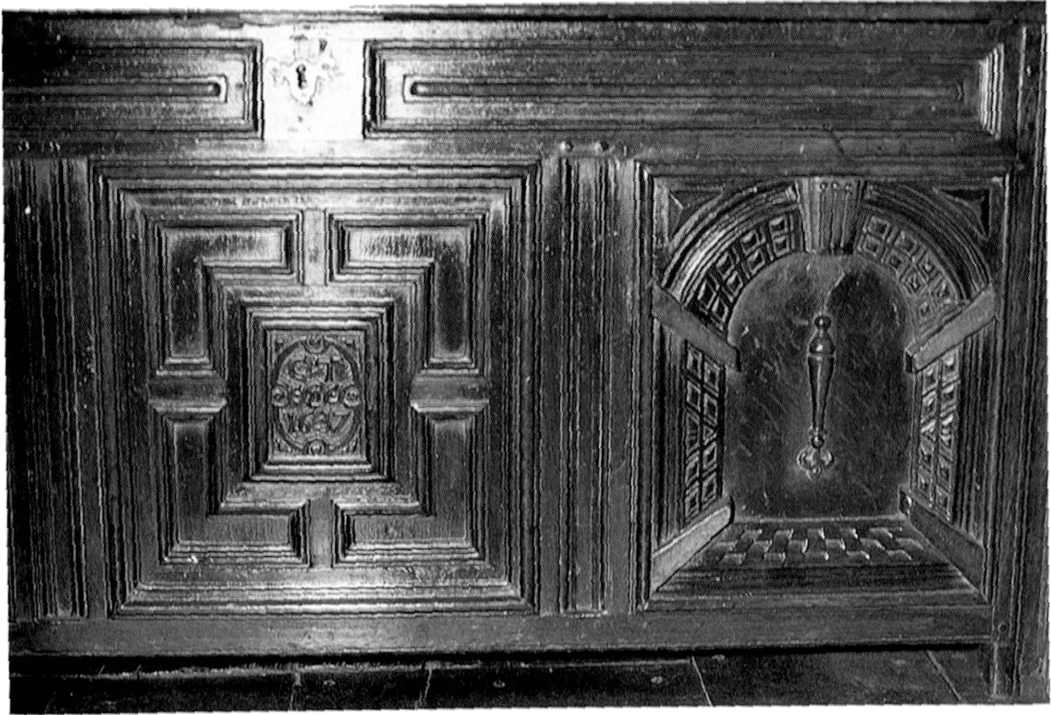
25. Sounding-board of the pulpit at Tibenham



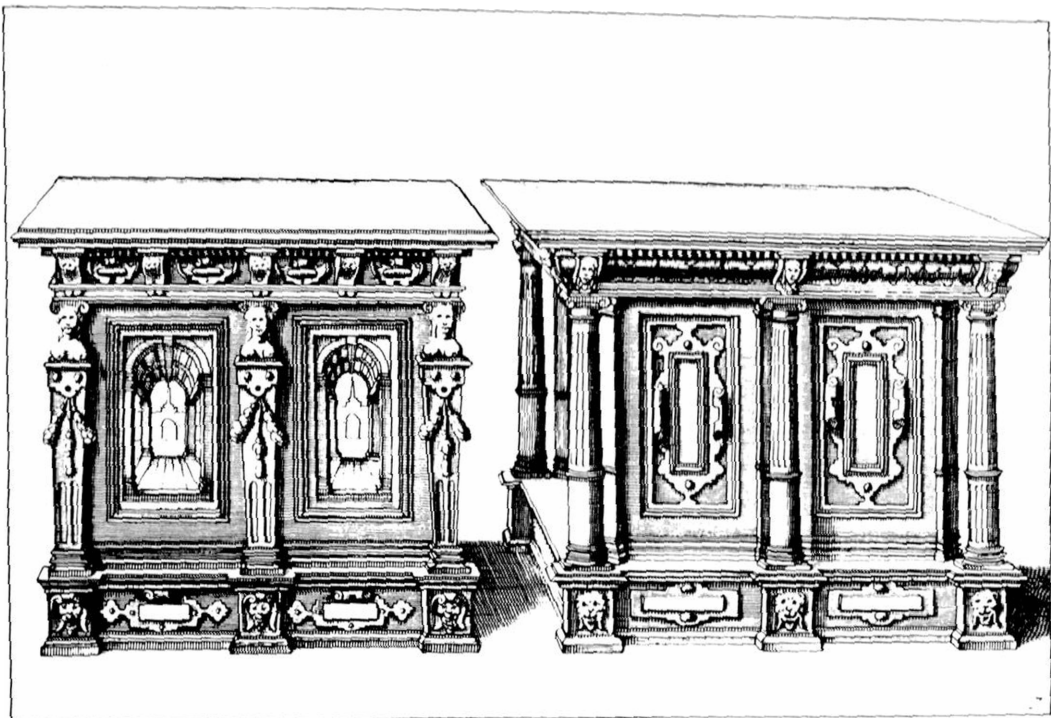
26. Pulpit at Aylsham, 1637



27. Panelling at Itteringham, 1630s



28. Chest at Strangers Hall, Norwich, dated 1637



29. Paul Vredeman de Vries's *Verscheijden Schrynwerck* of 1630, plate 7, left-hand design



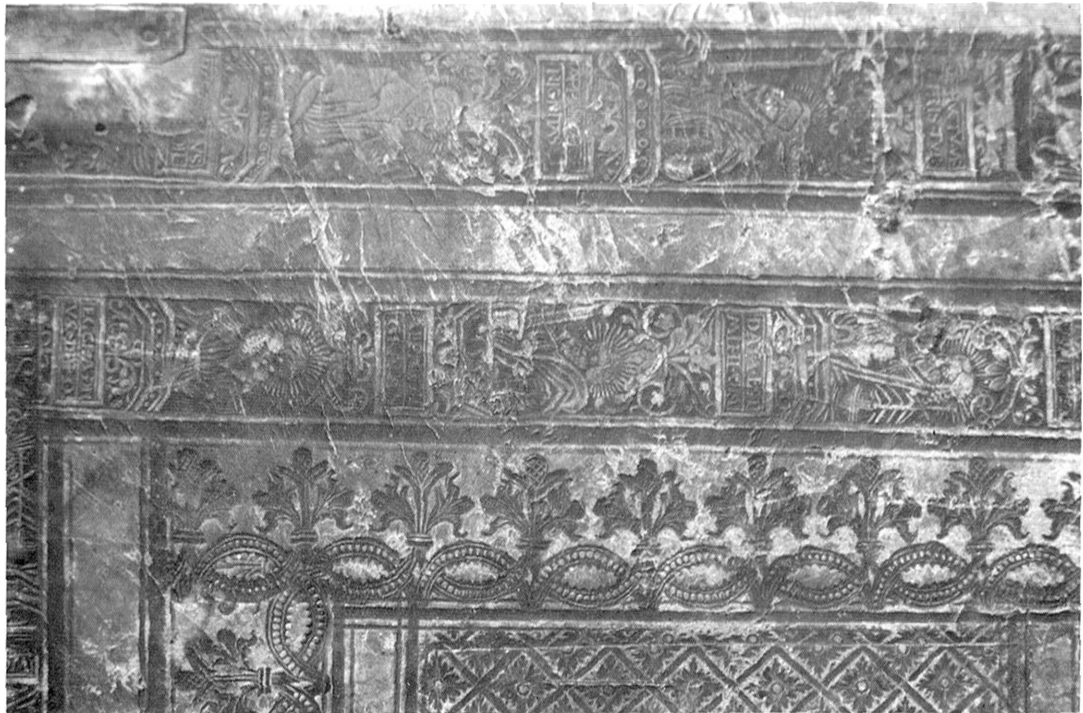
30. Pulpit at Wighenhall St Germans, 1631



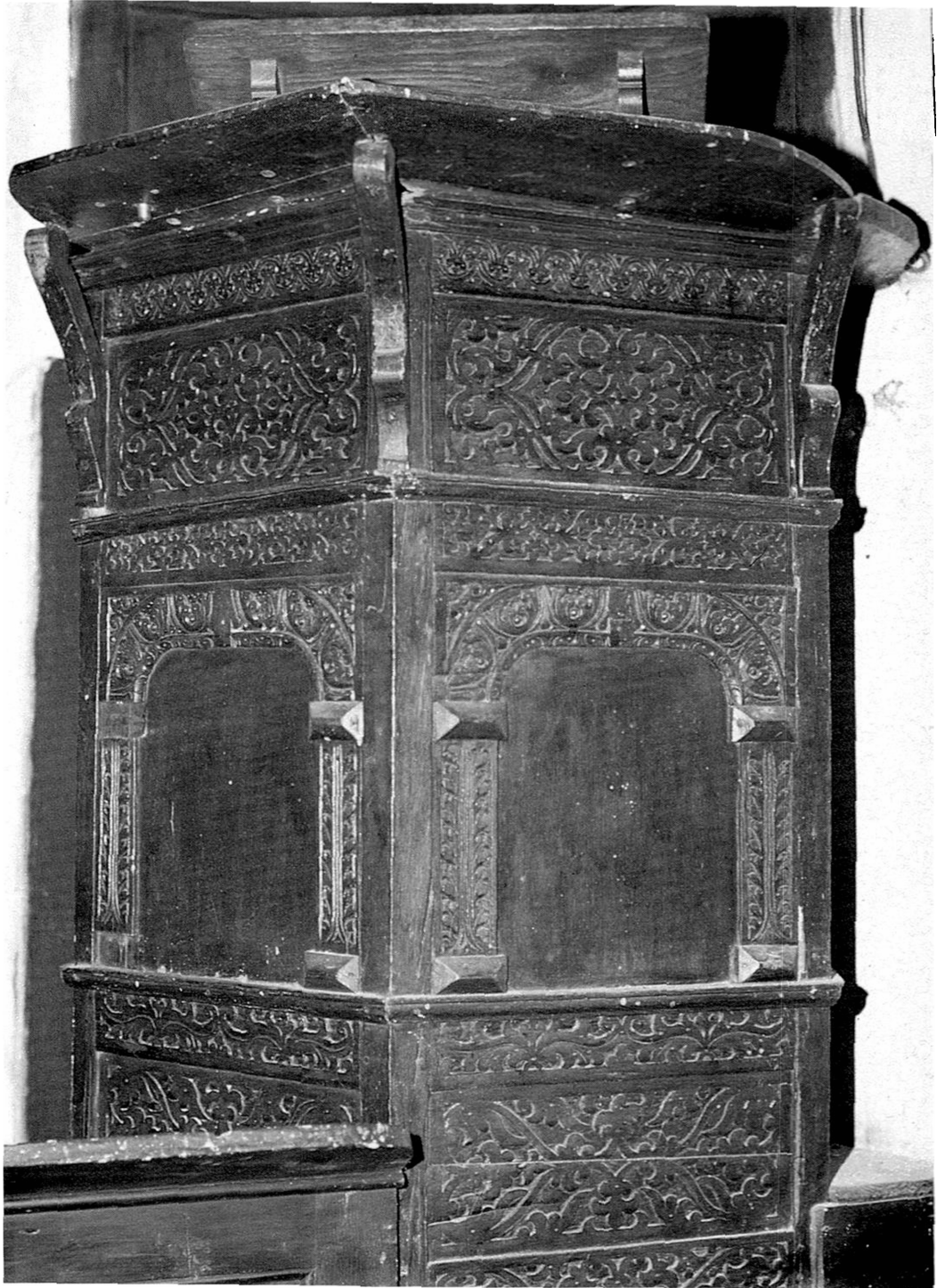
31. Poorbox at Wickenhall St Mary, 1639



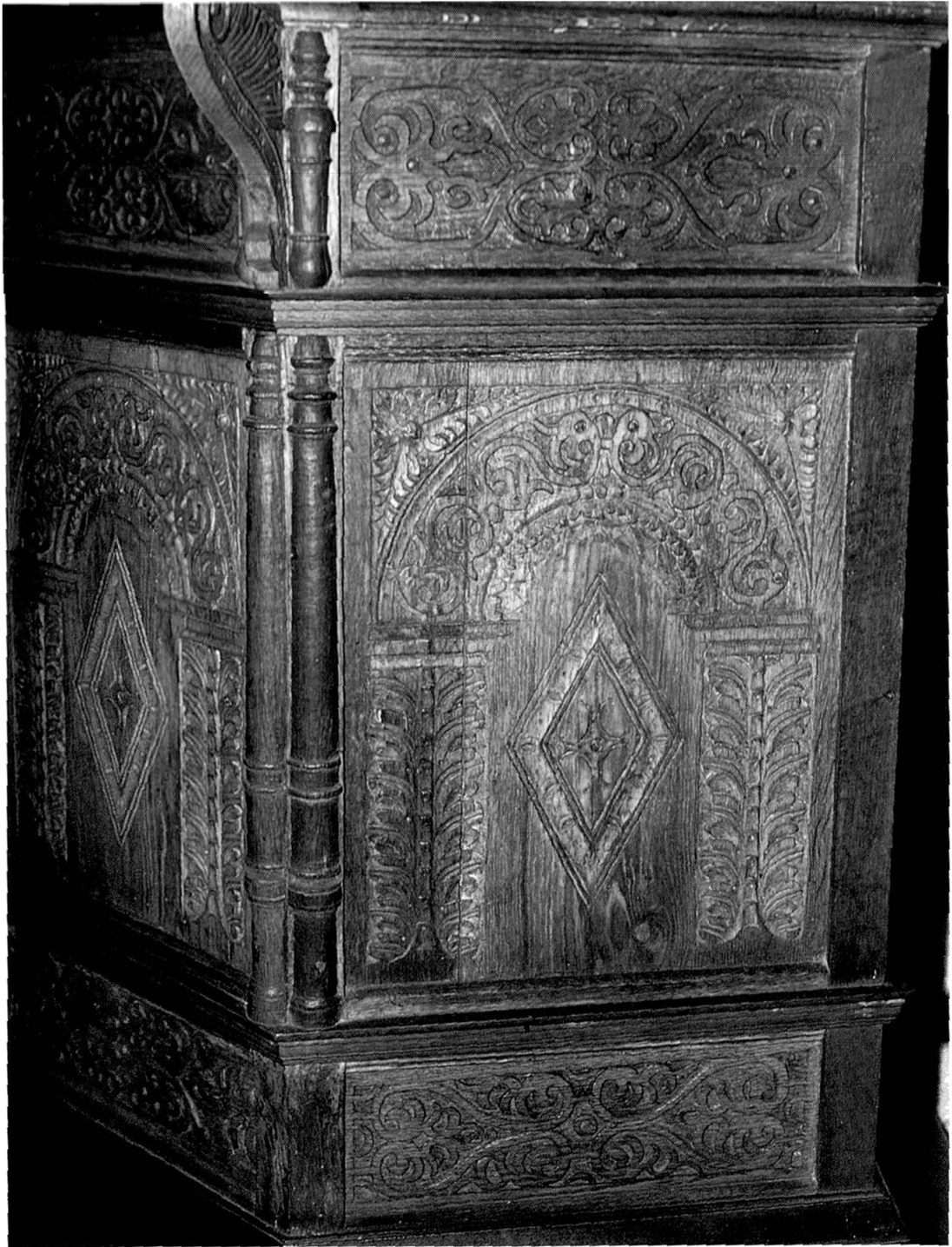
32. Font Cover at Saxthorpe, dated 1621



33. Punched ornament on a binding of Conrad Gesner's *Vogelbuch*, 1560 in the Library at Skokloster in Sweden



34. Pulpit at Stanfield



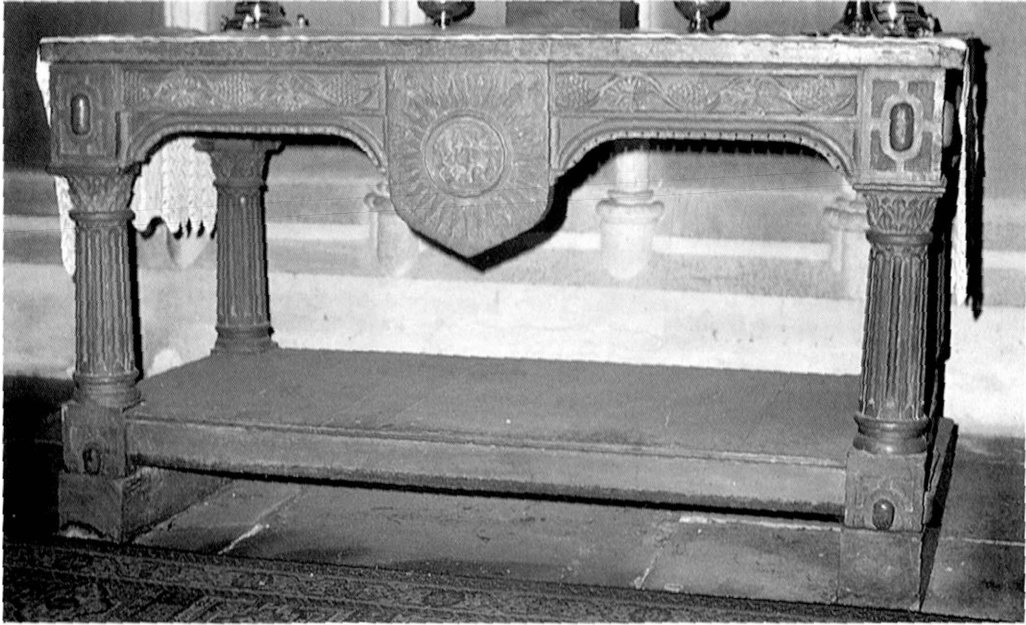
35. Pulpit at Thuxton



36. Table, dated 1613



37. Table, dated 1634



38. Table, dated 1622



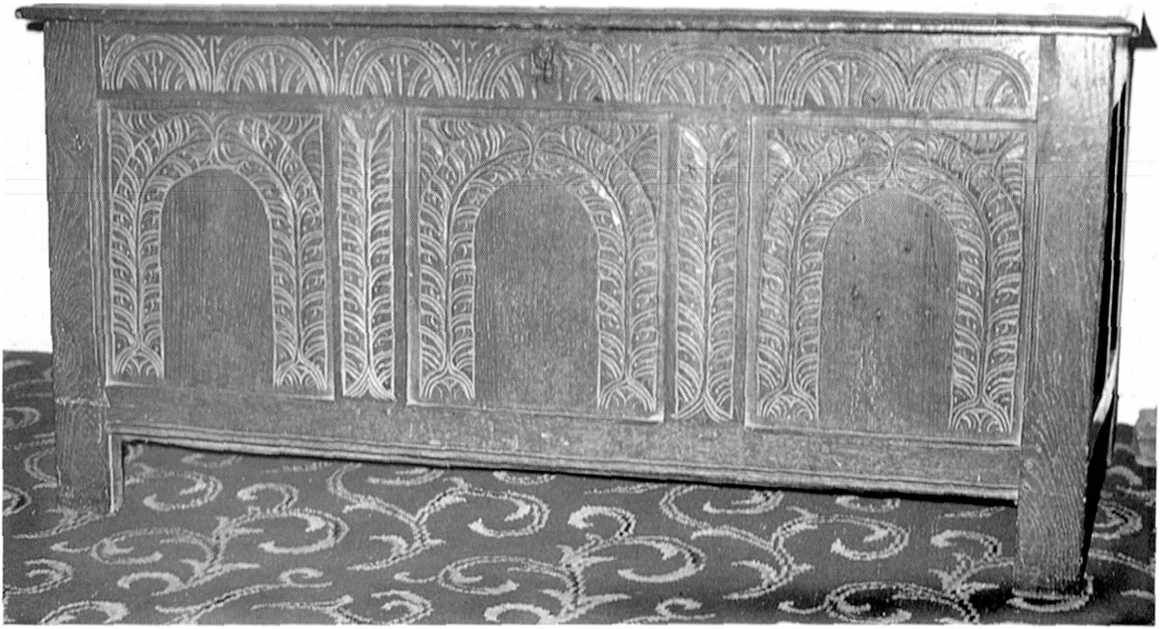
39. Table, dated 1625



40. Table, dated 1640



41. Table, perhaps 1630-40



42. Chest, mid-seventeenth century



43. Chest, elm, dated 1716



44. Chair, perhaps late sixteenth century



45. Chair, perhaps c. 1600



46. Panelling at Bridgham, perhaps early seventeenth century



47. Benches at Heydon, perhaps early seventeenth century



48. Benches at Bressingham, early seventeenth century

occurs in the panelling of the former Star Hotel at Great Yarmouth (now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) which has such panels together with square panels in mannerist frames, panels contained beneath depressed arches, all separated by caryatid or term figures.⁹

The type of pulpit which has round-headed arches separated by corner colonnettes is repeated at North Elmham, apparently executed between 1614 and 1626, and perhaps somewhat later at Tacolneston, where the arches are of the perspective type. The unusual treatment of these arches and their spandrels — they are grooved to form linked rectangles — and the curiously arcaded pedestals on which the columns stand are repeated on the overwhelming font cover at Walpole St Peter, and it is therefore probable that the same joiner was responsible for both, though they are separated geographically by more than half a century. The font cover is the most impressive seventeenth-century example in the county (Figs 15 and 16), and is a very convincing essay in northern European mannerism, stylistically all but indistinguishable from pulpits surviving at Ginneken or Beets in The Netherlands.¹⁰ It has a full complement of mannerist ornamental baggage, term figures on tapering supports, brackets, crestings, obelisks, strapwork friezes and so on. In the greatest

contrast is the interior (Fig. 17) which is as restrained as the exterior is riotous. It is disappointing that the identity of the joiner responsible for this masterpiece is not recorded, though one may guess that he was either a foreigner, or a native joiner trained in a foreigner's shop.

Round-arched panels also characterise the relatively simple pulpit of 1620 at Walpole St Peter (Fig. 18), where the pilasters and the arch itself are carved with lozenges alternating with rosettes, a motif which is also associated with furniture in Yorkshire. The back-board and sounding-board survive, the latter with pretty pendants at the corners and horizontal panels decorated with arabesques executed in what appears to be a stencilled technique (Fig. 19). The undated but particularly elaborate pulpit at Loddon is also of this corner-colonnade kind but it introduces several elements which may belong to the 1630s rather than the 1620s. The panels have paired arches emphasised by applied jewel ornament and enclosing applied split-balusters (Fig. 20). More applied ornament occurs in the plinth level and in the frieze while the outward-sloping attic is carved with a virtuoso display of repeated interlocking scrolls.

The 1630s saw the manufacture of a number of the finest pulpits to survive in Norfolk. The one at Tuttingham is itself undecorated but what now serve as its steps are dated 1635 and are carved with overlapping lunettes, in a counterchange pattern forming repeated vesicas. The next decade saw an explosion of applied ornament notably on the pulpit at Necton (1636, with later alterations, Fig. 21). They also feature on those at Roydon (Fig. 22), Wickington (with some Serlian double-guilloche, Fig. 23), and more simply at Frenze and Framingham Earl, so these may all date from this decade. In domestic woodwork, so too may a handsome chimneypiece and overmantel in the White Bedroom of the Old Bishop's Palace, King's Lynn, where both the main panels and the horizontal subsidiary panels are subdivided by applied mouldings and there is elsewhere much subtle use of applied balusters and acorns.

But these years also experienced a revival of Netherlandish mannerism, the influence of which seems to have inspired, for instance, the pulpit at Tibenham (Fig. 24) which dates from c. 1635. It does not break new ground stylistically but it is a remarkably complete mannerist example, finely executed and excellently preserved; the sounding-board is particularly impressive, having its crestings, obelisks and pendants, and retaining, as elsewhere, substantial areas of blue and gold (Fig. 25). Elsewhere, mannerist detail is more closely followed, perhaps reflecting the publication in Antwerp of Paul Vredeman de Vries's *Verscheyden Schrynwerck* in 1630 or, closer to hand, the influence of Blickling, a house which was in building through most of the 1620s — it was finished in 1627. Blickling 'is indeed an exotic in Norfolk'¹¹ and the triumvirate of master craftsmen who built it was headed by Robert Lyming, lately of Hatfield (1608–12), who acted as surveyor and as carpenter, which was his trade. Blickling contains much late-mannerist woodwork, chiefly the staircase and the chimneypieces and overmantels in the Parlour, dated 1627, and the Great Chamber, for which Lyming was paid in the winter of 1627–28: the former has single and paired term figures and some applied jewel ornament, the latter resembles those of Hatfield and Cranbourne Manor and belongs stylistically, therefore, to a group outside the county.

The influence of comparable houses on their own areas — Hardwick is an excellent example — leads us to look for the influence of Blickling, and of Lyming in particular, on the

woodwork and furniture of Norfolk during the 1620s (Lyming died in 1629). An obvious starting point is the village church, but the pulpit there is a simplified version — though conceivably a precursor — of the one at Aylsham nearby (Fig. 26), which was made in 1637, eight years after Lyming's death. They share the same horizontal panels of the lowest register and the distinctive treatment of the perspective arches, so they are certainly by the same joiner. So must the highly-accomplished panelling at Itteringham (Fig. 27), a few miles north-west, judging by the virtually identical form of its tapering supports; and a chest dated 1637, in Strangers Hall, Norwich, which has perspective arches very like those on the Aylsham and Blickling pulpits (Fig. 28). Its arches are carved with coving and have much-elongated keystones and imposts, and there is a suggestion of a pavement in the lower part of the panel: but the uncertainty in the handling of the imposts suggests that the joiner was adapting some printed source. Such a source exists, in a panelled cabinet in Paul Vredeman de Vries's *Verscheyden Schrynerwerck* of 1630, plate 7 (Fig. 29), and this could have provided the inspiration here.

There are, in fact, no pieces of woodwork of the 1620s that obviously reflect Lyming's influence although the same kind of mannerist vocabulary is to be found on the pulpit at Wiggenhall St Germans (Fig. 30), dated 1631, which has at the corners applied tapering columns with annular rings, surmounted by urn finials and with drop pendants; above are applied small mannerist cartouches. The panels are rectangular and contain pedimented aedicules. There is nothing quite like them in any of the work of either Jan or Paul Vredeman de Vries. Even more interesting for the purposes of comparison is a poorbox (Fig. 31) in the neighbouring church of Wiggenhall St Mary, dated 1639 on a brass plaque and certainly the work of the same joiner. It is very similar to the pulpit in having applied split-balusters on the corner trusses, but the panels have fretted mannerist cartouches ornamented with applied bosses — only those on the ends now survive.

These distinguished examples of woodwork are like a bit of Oxford, or even of London, in exile. Stylistically they are right up to date even by comparison with metropolitan examples, for instance, the overmantel of the Jerusalem Chamber in Westminster Abbey, made by the joiner Adam Browne in 1629, or the cabinet at Arbury Hall, Warwickshire, which is almost certainly by the same joiner, both done for William Laud while Bishop of London between 1628 and 1633. Examined more closely and it becomes apparent that the cartouches on the poor box are identical to those on a chimneypiece, also dating from the 1630s, in one of the rooms of the Canterbury Quadrangle at St John's College, a college where Laud had been President from 1611 to 1621 and which, as Chancellor of the University in 1630, he had endowed with some of his worldly wealth by building the Canterbury Quadrangle.¹²

Could the Wiggenhall pulpit and poorbox have been made by Adam Browne, who did so much work for Laud, or by an associate? Or was a common source, so far unidentified, involved?

Adam Browne was capable of being an architect as well as a joiner. His joinery work is distinctive and eclectic. Both the Jerusalem Chamber overmantel and the Arbury cabinet have very elaborate mannerist aedicules in the panels, and these also appear on the pulpit and panelling in the chapel of Lincoln College, Oxford, and must be by Browne, too.¹³ Another cabinet, formerly belonging to Ronald Lee, is virtually a pair to the Arbury cabinet but the aedicules actually derive from a known source, J.J. Ebelmann's *Thresor Buch* of

1598, plate 6.¹⁴ The question really is whether Browne could also have made the smaller chimneypiece in the Canterbury Quadrangle and, accordingly, the Wiggshall pulpit and poorbox as well. They do seem somewhat different from Browne's attested work and are perhaps by one of the joiners who worked under Browne at St John's.

Some time has been devoted to considering these advanced works of the early 1630s partly to confirm that this style, characterised by perspective arches and applied ornament, was well established in Norfolk by this decade and would have been familiar to John Symonds (?1595–1671), a joiner from Great Yarmouth who arrived at Salem, Massachusetts in 1636. He set up a workshop there which produced a substantial number of up-to-date, English-looking chests, cupboards and cabinets.¹⁵

There are some examples of dated woodwork which do not conveniently fit into this broad picture of stylistic development but are nevertheless of interest from a decorative point of view. One such is the screen at Tilney All Saints, dated 1618 in a small but ornate cartouche attached to the lateral rail which supports the balusters forming the upper part of the screen. These elongated and symmetrical balusters are punctuated by tall obelisks rising to meet pendants hanging from the top rail which has opposed dragons in the frieze. Below all this are round arches formed by spandrels of pierced foliage which may derive from some continental printed pattern.

A minor but intriguing object is one of several dated seventeenth-century font covers in the county. This is at Saxthorpe (dated 1621, Fig. 32) and the carved pattern on the panels was formed by inscribing arcs from centres one above the other to produce a simple bead and reel — just as every schoolchild must have done in an idle moment; in this form the motif is indeed found on a chest surviving in the county, though it is more associated with Dorset-made furniture. But at Saxthorpe — and incidentally on a similar font cover at Easington in Oxfordshire — leaves and stylised flowers sprout from the top, suggesting a nobler origin than mere doodling. As the self-same pattern was part of the ornamental stock-in-trade of the renaissance printer and bookbinder — this example (Fig. 33) is from a binding of Conrad Gesner's *Vogelbuch* of 1560 in the Library at Skokloster in Sweden — it must have been a punch of this sort that was the Norfolk carver's inspiration. The same joiner may have been responsible for the font cover at Tuttingham, dated 1638, which has similar incised scrolls above gadrooned panels. Before we move on to some examples of movable woodwork it is worth mentioning two undated pulpits which boast a wealth of carved ornament which may be of value for comparative purposes. These are at Stanfield (Fig. 34), where the depressed arch is similar to that of an overmantel at Stranger's Hall, Norwich, which dates from the ownership of Sir Joseph Paine between 1659 and 1668, and at Thuxton (Fig. 35), where the decoration consists mainly of variations on a foliated scroll.

In a county which, as Cautley noted, is less well off for tables than its neighbour, Suffolk, there are in fact a surprising number of dated examples, one being a very plain one of 1613, though this does have a pulvinated frieze and scrolled brackets (Fig. 36). Then come four spanning the twenty-five years from 1615 to 1640. The earliest has plain cup and cover legs and a curved-section frieze with slightly raised blocks over the legs and in the centre, the latter bearing the date 1615. Very similar is one of nearly a generation later, the chief difference being the central apron bearing the date 1634 and the initials TM (Fig. 37) which does look something of an afterthought. Sandwiched between these in date is a table of 1622

(Fig. 38), which has fluted column legs with leafy capitals, vine-trail frieze and a central tablet carved with the date and inscription VERA VITIS CHRIS in a sunburst. It also retains a colour scheme of indeterminate age, in blue and gold as on the pulpit at Tibenham. More conventional is a table dated 1625 (Fig. 39), with leafy cup and gadrooned cover legs and a guilloche frieze; it was given new stretchers in 1825. Slimmer, fluted cup and cover legs occur on another table, dated 1634, while the last of these dated examples (Fig. 40) still has cup and cover legs, in this case gadrooned all over, but the frieze is carved with a tight pattern of scrolls and there are specially attractive and well thought out tablets for the initials GY and the date, 1640. Beneath the frieze in the centre are paired pierced scrolls forming an apron.

These are also found in the county on a group of distinguished tables of very evident continental influence. They are presumably the product of one shop, which must be that of an immigrant craftsman. Being undated, it is not certain when these were made but they are strongly reminiscent of one of the Vredeman de Vries designs illustrated earlier (Fig. 5). They are distinguished by turned baluster legs of the finest quality, by applied ornament and by the ebonisation of mouldings (Fig. 41). The frieze has two drawers with raised and fielded panels, the fields of which are ebonised, while the rails at the ends are shaped with a moulding plane. Could they date from the sixteenth century? We shall have to wait until a securely documented example comes to light before we can be sure, although the nearest analogues are with continental furniture of the mid-seventeenth century — such as the stand of a Dutch cabinet in the Museum Mr Simon van Gijn in Dordrecht — and the chests with drawers and chests of drawers dating perhaps from the 1630s onwards, like an example in Strangers Hall, Norwich.

Overall, some design features appear to be characteristic of Norfolk-made tables. A considerable number have brackets linking the legs and the frieze, either integral with the frieze or made separately. Again, a number have a central feature — sometimes taking the form of a pendant or paired scrolls supported from the frieze. Others have both brackets and pendants. Friezes may be moulded or carved with almost any of the ornamental motifs already encountered on fixed woodwork.

Norfolk is not specially rewarding for chests, if the famous late-medieval and early renaissance examples which have been illustrated many times in the past are excluded. Handsome examples do survive, none the less. The dated chest, of 1637, in Strangers Hall, Norwich, has already been illustrated (Fig. 28). The most lavishly decorated chests are carved on all the rails and have round arches enclosing a lozenge. On a few examples, the round arch is treated not architecturally, with imposts and keystones and so on, but graphically (Fig. 42); and the ornament on less skilful pieces tends to be incised rather than carved. A couple of chests have the fluted stiles and applied ornament observable on the pulpits and may date from the 1630s. As in other counties of England, there seems to have been a revival — or was it a survival — of the medieval plank chest type in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. A very fine example in elm, dated 1716 and incised with lunettes ornamented with guilloche, is illustrated in Figure 43.

Neither is Norfolk outstanding for chair design, unlike Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cheshire or Westmorland. Surviving examples which seem to be indigenous rather than imported (as are those at Blickling) may, however, often be early in date: shaped aprons are not uncommon and turned elements resemble those of dated tables (Fig. 44). Shallow scrolled

crestings overhanging the back-posts seem to be diagnostic to some extent, although there are examples where the top rail is set within the posts. Back panels usually have a round arch but in one case the back consists of a lattice of vertical and horizontal bars (Fig. 45), while another is divided into three — two plain panels beneath a carved horizontal panel (Fig. 12). This arrangement apart, the form of this chair is very close to that of a joined chair made in New England which descended in the Hobart and Ripley families of Hingham, Massachusetts: John Hobart (d. 1655), joiner, may indeed have been born in Hingham, Norfolk.¹⁶

During the course of this brief survey of furniture and woodwork in Norfolk many patterns of carving have been illustrated, including guilloche, fluting and gadrooning. A few more need to be included, either because of their sheer quality or to make the picture more rounded, though there are none that are exclusive to the county, as there are to Westmorland, for instance. Arabesques, or the paired scrolls which represent a simplification of them, were a very popular motif but rarely are they handled so confidently as on panelling at Bridgham (Fig. 46). It may be that these derive from some printed source but this has yet to be isolated as so many of these were produced in the sixteenth century. Arabesques were also used at Long Stratton in combination with lunettes. The latter were much favoured and were frequently made to overlap, the divisions then being treated in differing ways: one possibility is illustrated on some benches at Heydon (Fig. 47) and there is a similar example at Shimpling. Dragons were also used both singly and in pairs, as at East Harling, Tibenham or Bressingham (Fig. 48).

These motifs are all classical in origin confirming that the printed page or the example of foreign craftsmen were the dominant influences in a county which had a long tradition of trade with the Low Countries and supported a substantial immigrant population. Foreign influence continued to be felt in the area well into the seventeenth century and is expressed in some very advanced mannerist decoration, equivalent to what is known as Artisan Mannerism in architecture. There is plenty of evidence from examples of dated furniture and woodwork that this phase of mannerist influence occurred in the 1630s and was little if any later in Norfolk than it was in London. As a result of this continental influence there seems to have been little if any need for joiners to make use of more local sources of visual inspiration such as have been found in the Lake District or in Devon.¹⁷

REFERENCES

1. Nikolaus Pevsner, *North East Norfolk and Norwich* (Harmondsworth, 1962), p. 36.
2. Norfolk supplied, for instance, over 73 per cent of the settlers, whose origins can be traced, in Hingham, Massachusetts; of these, three at least were joiners — Stephen Lincoln I, John Hobart and John Farrar I — information from Robert Blair St George, *The Wrought Covenant* (Brockton, Massachusetts, 1979), p. 61.
3. For security reasons, provenances are given for fixed woodwork only.
4. The standing cupboard is illustrated in Margaret Jourdain, *English Decoration and Furniture of the Early Renaissance, 1500–1650* (London, 1924), Fig. 263.
5. See A. P. Baggs, 'Sixteenth-Century Terra-Cotta Tombs in East Anglia', *The Archaeological Journal*, CXXV (1969), pp. 297–301.
6. Illustrated in Margaret Jourdain, *op. cit.*, Figs 44, 47, 48.
7. The Sotherton panels are illustrated in Jourdain, *op. cit.*, Fig. 50.
8. William White, History, *Gazetteer and Directory of Norfolk, and the City and County of Norwich* (Sheffield, 1845), p. 246 (quoted in Robert F. Trent, 'The Symonds Shops of Essex County, Massachusetts', in Francis J. Puig and Michael Conforti (eds), *The American Craftsman and the European Tradition, 1620–1820* (Minneapolis, 1989), p. 30).

9. Even more elaborate is an overmantel formerly in the King's House, King's Lynn, which was removed to Bawdsley Manor, Suffolk, and subsequently sold by Mary Bellis.
10. The pulpits are illustrated in C. A. van Swigschem, T. Brouwer and W. van Os, *Een huis voor het Woord: Het protestantse kerkinterieur in Nedeland tot 1900* (The Hague, 1984), p. 182.
11. Caroline Stanley-Millson and John Newman, 'Blickling Hall: the building of a Jacobean mansion', *Architectural History*, Vol. 29 (1986), pp. 1-46 (p. 14).
12. The Jerusalem Chamber and the Arbury Cabinet are illustrated in Howard Colvin, *The Canterbury Quadrangle, St. John's College, Oxford* (Oxford, 1988), Figs 41 and 42; the chimneypiece in Room C3, 2, is Fig. 66.
13. This is somewhat ironical, for Lincoln College chapel was built at the expense of John Williams, Bishop of Lincoln, a man intensely hostile to Laud.
14. The cabinet is illustrated in Victor Chinnery, *Oak Furniture: the British Tradition* (1979), Fig. 4:41, and the source in Simon Jervis, *Printed Furniture Designs Before 1650* (1974), No. 197.
15. See Robert F. Trent, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-41.
16. The American-made chair is illustrated in Robert St George, *op. cit.*, p. 63, no. 72.
17. See Anthony Wells-Cole, *Oak Furniture from Lancashire and the Lake District* (Temple Newsam House, Leeds, 1973); and 'Classical Inspiration in English Oak', *Antique Dealer and Collector's Guide* (February 1984), pp. 38-41.