



Peter Bloore explaining the history of Wingfield Church

Thursday 6 July Wingfield Church and College

Peter Bloore, our host for the morning and owner of Wingfield College, met us in the church and explained some of its history. Sir John Wingfield, whose tomb we saw, made his money capturing and then ransoming French nobles during the Hundred Years War and supporting the Black Prince, died in 1361, leaving money for a chantry college to provide work for British priests. A chantry college was licensed to say masses for the souls of the departed, who, if they were wealthy enough, supplied money during their lifetimes for this service. His tomb is a rare example of a wooden rather than stone or alabaster effigy.

John Wingfield's daughter married Michael de la Pole, 1st Earl of Suffolk, and in the arch above her tomb are depicted a pole cat, the knot symbol of Staffordshire and wings for the Wingfield connection. The church also contains the alabaster tomb of Elizabeth Plantagenet, sister of Richard III.

The church is typical of many we were to see in Suffolk, light, airy, with clear clerestory windows and a selection of carved bench ends, some 19th-century, others from the 17th century. We saw a 16th-century domed iron-bound chest, an unusual portable shelter to cover the priest when officiating in the rain at a graveside, probably dating from the late 18th century, and the sound-board of a mechanical organ, said to be c. 1540. The misericords were undecorated.



Linenfold panelling in the domestic cloister of Wingfield Hall

From the church we moved to Wingfield Hall next door, which Peter Bloore has been restoring. The front of the house dates from 1790 when it was added to the original timber-framed structure. Little remains of the original chantry house but a later (c. 1380) great hall (the felling dates for the timbers are 1379 and 1383); the hall was altered c. 1520 to a raised aisle type with crown-post roof. Wingfield College was one of the first to be disbanded during the Dissolution, c. 1538, but still contains the rare feature of a domestic cloister. On one wall of this we saw a piece of linenfold panelling containing contemporary portraits of Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, Mary Tudor his wife and his son, the Earl of Lincoln, all in remarkable condition and clear definition.

The rooms upstairs still have their original 14th-century floorboards and the present owner has furnished them with appropriate early oak pieces, including a linen press dated 1671 and an oak chest on legs of c. 1720.

Downstairs a small dining room now with Georgian panelling and shutters contained a collection of late 18th- and early 19th-century chairs, including an early Windsor chair.

St Peter's Hall

We arrived for lunch at St Peter's Hall, now a brewery and restaurant, but basically a romantic moated building dating from about 1539; records show that it is built from materials salvaged from Flixton Abbey after the Dissolution, when John Trasburgh bought the valuable Caen stone to build his own new house. The porch has the

typical Suffolk feature of flushwork on its buttresses and along the front plinth, incorporating the initials TGES beneath crowns. There are un-domestic-looking three-light gothic windows in the north and south walls. We lunched in the hall of 1539 which had been restored to a single space in 1969 when the original fireplace was reinserted. 16th-century panelling can still be seen in the first-floor room.

Penny Sturgis