

A Technical Study of the Font and Font Canopy at St. Peter Mancroft, Norwich, in the East Anglian Context

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This essay examines the structure and paint schemes of the font and font canopy as they survive in St. Peter Mancroft, Norwich, today (plates X and Y). A visual survey of both was conducted on site from ground level, identifying original and non-original structural elements where possible and attempting to understand the initial construction and decoration, as well as subsequent visible interventions to which both have been subjected over time. Key aims of this research included determining a date range for the font canopy, understanding its original design, and ascertaining whether there was always an integral and descending font cover. On both font and canopy, the highly fragmentary ground and paint layers were examined with the aim of identifying both the original materials used (where surviving) and any later interventions such as repainting, to the extent that either was possible. Where viable, alterations are contextualised with the documented physical history of both objects, as outlined in Zachary Stewart's essay in this volume (chapter 6). The font and canopy were inspected using normal light and Ultraviolet light (UV-A spectrum: 365 nm \pm 5 nm). Near-Infrared photography of select areas was also undertaken, using an adapted camera operating in the range 715 through 1,200 nm.¹

Six microscopic samples were taken from the font and nine from the font canopy. Parts of the samples were set at cross-sections and analysis undertaken using light microscopy, Scanning Electron Microscopy with Energy Dispersive X-Ray Spectroscopy (SEM-EDS), and Polarised

¹ The UV light was a Reskolux UV 365 handheld torch. The camera was an adapted Canon EOS 30D (XNiteCanon30DIR).

Light Microscopy (PLM) in order to explore the inorganic materials used and their stratigraphy.² Instrumental organic analysis was not undertaken as part of the study, although staining tests were performed to give some indication of the binding media used.³ Nonetheless, a close comparison of the layer structures of the paint on the original canopy sheds light on the *disjecta membra* now located in the Philadelphia Museum of Art (PMA), thought to have once derived from the font canopy. A key question to ask of the technical evidence is whether these objects can be reliably placed at all together via a shared physical history and, if so, at what point their histories diverged (i.e., whether are there traces of the same paint schemes on them both). If they were together, can it be determined with any certainty from the physical evidence, structural and painted, where the PMA pieces originated within the larger structure?

The results of the inorganic analysis, coupled with the technical examination of the wooden structure and the paint schemes on site, are placed here in the context of the author's technical study of hundreds of contemporary late-medieval rood screens, parclose screens, and painted pulpits in East Anglia and elsewhere in England, and in the context of physical alterations to religious art during the English Reformation and beyond.⁴

² SEM-EDS was undertaken using a Quanta-650F Field Emission Gun Scanning Electron Microscope (FEG-SEM). Polarised Light microscopy was undertaken using a Leica DM2700P microscope.

³ Using Amido black 2 and Rhodamine B.

⁴ L. Wrapson, "Patterns of Production: A Technical Art Historical Study of East Anglia's Late Medieval Screens" (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2014); L. Wrapson, "East Anglian Medieval Church Screens. A Brief Guide to Their Physical History," *Hamilton Kerr Institute Bulletin* 4 (2013): 33–47.

Description of the Font

St. Peter Mancroft's font has an octagonal bowl on a shafted stem and is carved in limestone, a material that had to be imported to Norfolk, an area without freestone of its own.⁵ It is widely accepted that St. Peter Mancroft's was originally a Seven Sacraments font, a type found predominantly in East Anglia, a region Ann Nichols describes as its heartland.⁶ There were originally eight relief panels on the faces on the outside of the bowl and figures at the base, around the thick octagonal stem and between the relief-carved panels themselves. Based on other fonts of this type, these likely were of saints and angels, perhaps including the tetramorphs of the four Evangelists and four Doctors of the Latin Church at the base and angels between the relief panels of the bowl.

St. Peter Mancroft's font and font canopy are likely not contemporary with one another. The surviving design and decorative detailing, such as the tracery carving on chamfers above and below the now-destroyed panels, suggests that this, the earlier dated object of the two, is the "fontem baptismalem" for which Norwich grocer John Causton, alias Julian Grocer, left 10 marks in 1463⁷ The decorative motif of roses combined with suns found on the lower chamfer

⁵ Louis Salzman discusses the importance of Barnack stone in East Anglia and the Fens. Stone was also imported to Norwich from as far away as Caen. L. F. Salzman, *Building in England down to 1540: A Documentary History* (Oxford, 1952), 131, 135.

⁶ A. E. Nichols, *Seeable Signs. The Iconography of the Seven Sacraments, 1350–1544* (Woodbridge, 1994), 75–76, 345.

⁷ The will is NRO, NCC, Betyns 161: "It[e]m leg[o] emendac[i]o[n]i d[ic]te ecc[les]ie ad fontem Baptismalem in ead[e]m de novo faciend[um] v[e]l ad aliud opus maior[em] necessar[i] et ap[er]tum in ead[e]m ecc[les]ia faciend[um] iux[t]a arbitriu[m] et discrec[i]o[n]em executor[um] meor[um] x m[a]rc[a]s." See chapter 1 of this volume. See also S. Cotton, "Tradition and Authority in Churchbuilding," *Norwich Archaeology Rescue Group* 26 (1981): 8–13 and A.

where the bowl meets the stem perhaps cites the symbols of Edward IV (r. 1461–1470/1471–1483), much as the pomegranates and roses on the PMA fragments cite Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon.⁸

Even a cursory look at the font reveals significant deliberate iconoclastic damage. The now-flat side panels of the bowl were once carved in relief, and the figures around the bowl and stem as well as at the base have all been hacked back. A font of this kind, including its relief sculptures, would originally have been painted, but comparatively few survived the Reformation, Civil War, and subsequent centuries of restoration with much original polychromy intact. The Seven Sacrament font in St. Andrew’s Church, Westhall, Suffolk retains a great deal of its original colour, and can be seen to have close affinities with the traditional colour schemes found throughout East Anglia on rood screens, fonts, pulpits, and font covers alike (fig. 3.1). This traditional colouration is characterised by the extensive use of red and green in opposition and alternation, white mouldings decorated with foliate patterns including red and blue flowers, extensive gilding in gold leaf, the use of barber-pole decoration, the application of tin relief, and the use of expensive blue pigments for vaults.⁹

[INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE.]

As presented now, the font appears largely unpainted. However, a closer look reveals areas of colour. Most striking is a panel on the northeast side which retains a fragmentary scene

Fryer, “Fonts with Representation of the Seven Sacraments: Supplement,” *Archaeological Journal* 90 (1933): 98–105.

⁸ Fryer, “Fonts with Representation of the Seven Sacraments: Supplement,” 98–99 and 104–5.

⁹ L. Wrapson, “Heralding the Rood: Colour Convention and Material Hierarchies on Late Medieval English Rood Screens,” in *The Rood in Medieval Britain and Ireland, c. 800–c.1500*, ed. P. Turner and J. Hawkes (Woodbridge, 2020), 145–59.

(plate X; fig. 3.2). This has confused the writers of Mancroft's church guides and some in the literature. Alfred Fryer, though leaning heavily on the font's restorer, R. N. Flood, thought the paint original to the Seven Sacraments font and identified it as the scene of Baptism with a polygonal stone font depicted.¹⁰ He describes a mass of red above the polygonal structure as remnants of the painting of the officiating priest. More likely, though nonetheless confusing, is Flood's own identification of this scene as a wooden pulpit standing in a landscape. Flood restored the font in 1926, removing paint in the process, including the letters R and P on the rim. He understood the destruction of relief sculpture from the octagonal panels and therefore the non-originality of the painting on the flat surfaces. Nichols, who consulted Flood's notes, reports that Flood thought the paint on the font consisted of two schemes of different dates, neither of which was original. The possible wooden pulpit scene he dated to c.1564, at which time he conjectured the sculptures were removed. He thought that the font stem was later painted in black with coloured dots to mimic marble, a scheme he dated to 1643.¹¹ These dates are by no means certain. As this study demonstrates, the first non-original scheme on the font might date from c.1547–1640 and the second to before c.1740. However, Flood does appear to have been correct in identifying two non-original schemes on the font, and it may be that he removed overpaint from one of these to reveal parts of the other.

[INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE.]

The font has not always been in its present location, in the north aisle of the west end of the church. It was originally located on a raised stone platform in front of the west door, close to

¹⁰ Fryer, "Fonts with Representation of the Seven Sacraments: Supplement," 100.

¹¹ Nichols, *Seeable Signs*, 345.

the tower doors.¹² It was removed to where it now stands in 1706 or 1707, at which time major alterations were made and the platform on which it stood was lowered “by a foot or two.”¹³ The current platform, which reuses elements of the original, was constructed during the restoration of 1887–1888, at which point the font was removed to the crypt and replaced.¹⁴ This phase of the monument’s historical appearance is documented in a photograph of c.1922 which shows the Victorian font in situ.¹⁵ Following Flood’s restoration, the original font was reinstalled in 1926.

Paint Schemes on the Font

For the study under discussion, six samples in total were taken from the font.¹⁶ The areas were selected to best characterise the surviving paint schemes with the minimum intervention, and

¹² For a detailed description of the locations of the font and font canopy over time, see chapter 6 of this volume.

¹³ W. Rye, “St. Peter Mancroft, Norwich: Its Parish History in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” in *The Norfolk Antiquarian Miscellany*, ed. Walter Rye, vol. 2, pt. 2 (Norwich, 1883), 337.

¹⁴ This was recorded by the then-vicar Frederick Baggallay, a relative of the Frank Baggallay responsible for the design of the renovated font canopy. F. Baggallay, *A Short Account of the Church of SS Peter and Paul at Mancroft, Norwich* (Norwich, 1889), 12.

¹⁵ H. Cescinsky and E. R. Gribble, *Early English Furniture and Woodwork*, vol. 1 (London, 1922), 158 (fig. 166).

¹⁶ The samples taken for analysis were less than 1mm³. Before being mounted they were divided in two. One portion was set in polyester casting resin with Butanox M50 liquid hardener and ground for examination in cross-section with a Leica DM2700M microscope under normal light, under UV light, and in bright field. Images were taken at 200X magnification. These cross-section samples were further analysed with scanning electron microscopy with energy dispersive x-ray spectroscopy (SEM-EDS) using a Bruker Quanta-650F Field Emission Gun Scanning Electron Microscope with BSE, SE, GSED, LFD, EBSD, CL, and two EDS detectors. The other divided material from sample fragments was used to make dispersions for Polarised Light

their locations are described in Table 1. The materials analysis was undertaken with the intention of exploring certain questions. For example, with knowledge of the tradition of East Anglian font painting and of technical conventions over time, could the paint be determined as original? If not, could it be dated on the basis of the techniques and materials used? Certain pigments were invented at certain times in history, which can provide a *terminus post quem* for specific paint schemes. This is especially useful in the case of blue pigments, which were historically either scarce and expensive (such as ultramarine or azurite) or prone to degradation and fading (such as indigo and smalt).¹⁷ For other materials, there are trajectories of trade and therefore usage.¹⁸ Paint stratigraphy also can be used to explore whether there is more than one paint scheme on an object, especially where layers can be seen to be separated by varnishes or remains of surface dirt collected in the time between repaints. Certain combinations of preparatory layers, paint

Microscopy (PLM), in which all layers were sampled, ground in methyl ethyl ketone, and mounted on a slide with a cover slip and set in Meltmount™ resin. The slides were examined using a Leica DM2700P microscope at 200X magnification.

¹⁷ For the histories of individual pigments and their known usage, see the four volumes of *Artists' Pigments: A Handbook of Their History and Characteristics*: Vol. 1, ed. R. Feller (Cambridge, 1986); Vol. 2, ed. A. Roy (Oxford, 1993); Vol. 3, ed. E. West Fitzhugh (Oxford, 1997); and Vol. 4, ed. B. Berrie (London, 2007); plus N. Eastaugh et al., *Pigment Compendium: A Dictionary and Optical Microscopy of Historic Pigments* (London, 2008); R. D. Harley, *Artists' Pigments c. 1600–1835: A Study in English Documentary Sources*, 2nd ed. (London, 1982); and H. Howard, *Pigments of English Medieval Wall Painting* (London, 2003).

¹⁸ For medieval and early modern trade in artists' materials, see S. Nash, J. Kirby, and J. Cannon, *Trade in Artists Materials: Markets and Commerce in Europe to 1700* (London, 2010).

layering, and mixing techniques are also indicative of specific time periods, as well as subject to national and regional differences.¹⁹

Sample PMF1 was taken from the yellow-brown of the painted “pulpit” on the east-facing side of the font (fig. 3.3). The paint here cannot be original to the 15th-century font, as it lies on plaster that was applied after the relief panels of this Seven Sacraments font were hacked back. Therefore, it and samples PMF2 and 4 are useful comparators to other samples which might potentially lie on a pristine original carved surface.

The lowest layers from the sample are two layers of plaster from the replastering, consisting of calcium carbonate with a little calcium sulphate, visible as an applied plaster and not stone from the back-scattered electron image of the sample. Over this plaster, a medium-rich layer was then applied, likely as a sealant. A grey paint layer came next, comprising lead white, chalk, and lamp black. Over this a bluer paint was applied, consisting of lead white and a small amount of the blue pigment azurite, of not particularly high quality. The “pulpit,” which appears to mimic a wooden structure (and is therefore unlikely to represent a font), was painted on this with no reserve left, using a mixture of a charcoal black, yellow ochre, and some red lake (identified via PLM).

[INSERT FIGURE 3]

Sample PMF2 comes from the same panel of the font, but instead from the red area above the boxlike structure. The build-up was found to be very similar to PMF1, with the same plaster, grey underlayer, and azurite/lead white layer. On top of this was a red layer, which was found to be a mixture of red lead, vermilion, and an organic red lake, the latter identified from a paint

¹⁹ For the history of preparatory layers from the early modern period, see M. Stols-Witlox, *A Perfect Ground: Preparatory Layers for Oil Paintings 1550–1900* (London, 2017).

dispersion. This mixture of red lead and vermilion with a glaze in red lake is commonly found in the medieval painting tradition. The lack of an unpainted reserve or unpainted space left for the composition is, however, not typical of the work of someone working in the medieval tradition, where use of a reserve is standard practice.²⁰

PMF3 was taken from a column painted to resemble marble. In theory, this sample could be from an original surface. However, it would appear instead that it follows the same paint build-up and materials as were found on the flat panel known to be a hacked-back and replastered surface. Here, too, there is a plaster consisting of calcium carbonate and calcium sulphate. Over this there is a grey layer of lead white, chalk, lamp black, and a little yellow ochre and red lead, comparable to the layers found in the same stratigraphic position in the first two samples. The uppermost layer is lead white, vermilion, red lake, and red lead. PMF3 does not have an evident oiling out or sealant layer over the plaster, but it may have been of variable thickness or entirely absorbed and therefore not be readily visible in this cross-section.

PMF4 was taken from some black paint at the edge of one of the now largely blank panels on the south side of the font. The black paint was observed to lie over a blue paint underneath, one visually comparable to that found on the background of the “pulpit” scene. From the bottom layer to the top, the cross-section revealed a plaster layer of calcium carbonate with a little calcium sulphate. Over this was the layer seen elsewhere, consisting of lead white, chalk, lamp black, and, in this case, the occasional red lead particle. This, in turn, was covered with a layer of lead white and azurite, a sequence of layers the same as found on PMF1. The topmost

²⁰ This technique is borne out on examination of the painted medieval screens of East Anglia, where reserve for compositional elements is standard, the exception being where figures are added to modify screens previously painted with a decorative scheme only.

layer consists of a charcoal black. Although it is not impossible for painters to have used both a charcoal black (ground from charcoal) as well as a lamp black (from finer-grained soot), this is likely to represent a later painting scheme.

[INSERT FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE.]

PMF5 was taken from the edge of a column where black paint was seen overlying a cool grey layer seen elsewhere (fig. 3.4). The sample was taken from close to the red column, as it was hoped that this would reveal whether the column had been painted before or after the cool grey background and whether the black formed a part of this scheme. The lowest layer is a plaster comparable to that found elsewhere, consisting of calcium carbonate and calcium sulphate. The cool grey paint also compares closely to other samples. There is a red layer over this, likely an overlap from the painting of the column adjacent to the sample location. On top of this is a dark brown/black paint layer consisting of charcoal, some chalk, and a manganese-containing burnt umber. The indication from this sample, as with PMF4, is that the black paint scheme was not the same scheme as either the red column or the blue/grey colour applied to the flattened side panels. The material difference is in the black paint's containing an umber as well as charcoal (whereas a lamp black is found in the grey layer), suggesting that there are two paint schemes here.

PMF6 was taken from an area where the stone font had been hacked back. Unfortunately, the sample turned over whilst being set, so the lower layers are not visible. The upper layer was found to comprise charcoal black mixed with red lead. This is likely the black paint with red dots described by Flood as mimicking marbling.²¹

²¹ As reported in Nichols, *Seeable Signs*, 345.

A combination of observation on site and the analysis undertaken indicates that none of the surviving paint on the font is original. It is, however, comparatively early in date and likely relates to the reworking of the font after iconoclasm, as Flood observed. All the pigments found are consistent with a medieval or early modern date, though that does not preclude their later use. The medium is likely oil paint, although this has not been instrumentally assessed.²² All of the materials used are hand-ground; therefore this paint predates the machine grinding of pigments that came into use from the mid-19th century.²³ The evidence suggests that Flood correctly observed two paint schemes. However, it is not clear whether he removed black paint to reveal the “pulpit” scene or whether it was always limited to the stem and surrounds of the font. The samples indicate that the font was replastered after iconoclastic attack and then painted grey. Select areas also were painted red (the columns) and the flat faces were adorned with one or more painted scenes (the pulpit). It is conjectural, but Flood’s suggestion of a c.1564 date for this campaign of painting is not impossible, though perhaps overly specific without further evidence. The use of natural azurite on the “pulpit” scene could indicate a 16th-century date for this intervention, but the pigment is of moderate quality and quite sparingly used. Although high-quality supplies continued to be available at a high price, overall, the azurite found on decorative

²² The presence of protein was explored using a Amido Black staining test and oil using Rhodamine B.

²³ The art supply manufacturer Winsor & Newton introduced machine grinding of pigments in 1840. L. Carlyle, *The Artist’s Assistant: Oil Painting Instruction Manuals and Handbooks in Britain, 1800–1900 with Reference to Selected Eighteenth-century Sources* (London, 2001), 150–51.

schemes lessened in quality after c.1541 in England.²⁴ Other blue pigments, such as smalt and blue verditer (an artificial azurite) came to be used in its place. R. D. Harley suggests that the end of the use of azurite as an artist's pigment in England came in the third quarter of the 17th century.²⁵ Ultimately, the pigment Prussian blue came to replace these alternatives for use in oil paint by the mid-18th century.²⁶

The font's repainting as evidenced by this scheme has some aspects in common with English medieval technique, such as the red lead and vermilion blend on the "pulpit" figure and this usage of the pigment azurite. Other aspects are not typically medieval: for example, the lack of reserve left for the "pulpit." The Reformation caused a fracture in the traditional craft of painting in East Anglia, with the cessation of much religious painting. It is clear that the painter here deviated in practice from someone apprenticed in the Norfolk medieval tradition.

Another intervention took place after the covering up of iconoclastic damage and likely before the piece's first known description, by Francis Blomefield in c.1740, who called it "a large ancient font, with its top supported by pillars, and . . . a heavy looking thing, though painted, and in good repair."²⁷ This reworking saw the font painted in dark colours and marbling. Flood dated this intervention to 1643, though, again, there is no specific evidence for

²⁴ According to Spanish painter Francisco Pacheco, supplies of high-quality azurite from Hungary were affected by the invasion of the Ottoman Turks in 1541. He describes how Philip II asked the Flemish painter Michiel Coxie to copy a van Eyck painting and the artist had to ask Titian in Venice for pigment of the requisite quality. F. Pacheco, *Arte de la Pintura: Edición del manuscrito original acabado el 24 enero de 1638* (Madrid, 1956), 2:61.

²⁵ Harley, *Artists' Pigments c. 1600–1835*, 49.

²⁶ Harley, *Artists' Pigments c. 1600–1835*, 73.

²⁷ Francis Blomefield and Charles Parkin, *An Essay towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*, 11 vols. (London, 1805–1810), vol. 4, 204.

this date, and it could equally have taken place in the 1640s, in the c.1706 movement of the font and change of the platform, or at any time until James Sillett painted the canopy in the 1820s.²⁸ This new painting likely once covered the “pulpit” scene, which displays some damage on its surface consistent with the removal of overpaint. Flood removed much of this black paint during his 1926 restoration, but retained the painted scene. It is necessary to sound a word of caution, however: Sillett’s undated drawing of the font and canopy, likely undertaken in the 1820s, has the former as a plain grey structure (see plate X), a reminder that historical images and descriptions are by no means infallible sources for the physical histories of polychrome monuments.

The painted evidence on the font therefore suggests the survival of none of its original scheme. It was repainted at least twice: once following iconoclasm c.1547, though when is not known, and again in the 17th or early 18th century. The second intervention probably took place before c.1740, at which point a description of the font suggests it had already been painted in black marbling. The font was moved in c.1706; it was taken down and put in the crypt 1887–1888 and then later restored, with much of the paint being removed c.1926, at which point it was reinstated beneath its font canopy, to which we now turn.

Description of the Font Canopy

The original parts of the font canopy consist of four large quarter-sawn oak upright pillars of broadly square section, which rise to pinnacles above an octagonal cornice (fig. 1). At the base of each post is a carved pedestal. The corners of each pillar are carved as round posts and the pillars themselves are decorated with tiers of carved image niches which formerly contained figures and

²⁸ For more on the dating of possible interventions, see chapter 1.

which are decorated with crocketed gables. The pillars are carved out of the depth of the wood, with no original additions. Each pillar terminates in three onion-domed turrets decorated with castellations and corresponding machicolations and pierced with “oilet” arrow slits; each is surmounted, too, by a castellated canopy. All of the wooden structure above this point dates to the 1887–1888 restoration.

In between the four structural pillars are four short pendants rising to pinnacles, which help define the octagonal shape of the canopy. Between the pillars and the pendants are tracery heads and a cornice which looks designed once to have held a painted inscription (and which did again in a recorded intervention in the 17th century); this is then topped with brattishing. All of these intermediate sections of the canopy are of horizontal running grain and also made of oak.

The oak used for the construction of the font canopy appears to be of two different qualities and origins. England had home-grown oak in the Middle Ages and it is likely carved green oak of local origin that we see employed in the pillars of the font canopy, where we can see both original twists in the wood grain as well as knots where branches would once have emerged (fig. 3.5). However, it is likely, though at present untested, that some of the tracery boards slotted into the framework were carved from planks imported from the Eastern Baltic (fig. 3.6). These planks are of less erratic grain, likely having grown tightly packed in oak woodlands. By contrast, many English oaks were parkland or coppice trees and grew less tall and straight and with more branches.²⁹ Contracts for woodwork, such as that from St. John’s College

²⁹ O. Rackham, *Woodlands* (London, 2006), 295, 311; I. Tyers, “Tree Ring Analysis,” in *The Thornham Parva Retable: Technique, Conservation and Context of an English Medieval Painting*, ed. A. Massing (Cambridge, 2003), 113–21; I. Tyers, “Appendix 1: The Eastern Baltic Timber Trade,” in *The Thornham Parva Retable*, 219–21; I. Tyers, “Aspects of the European

in Cambridge dating to 1516, sometimes stipulate these different types of oak, calling the imported planks “waynescot” and the bigger baulks “hable Tymber of Oke.”³⁰

[INSERT FIGURES 5 AND 6 ABOUT HERE.]

The underside of the canopy, though repaired likely more than once, is largely original. It is a vault of intersecting ribbed tracery laid out in a design allowing for a central octagonal void with 33cm length sides. This likely once housed a retractable font cover, and the remains of one are visible in three distinct positions in historical drawings of the font, including Sillett’s dating to c.1820, Henry Ninham’s of 1851, and Preston Willins’ of 1884 (see plates X, Y, and Z). Although the originality of this setup is impossible to confirm from these illustrations, it is suggestive, the cover apparently having survived a large-scale de-restoration of the font canopy from its visual appearance in c.1820. The wooden beading which frames the octagonal aperture in the centre is not original, but the overall tracery pattern of this vault is, and its symmetry and design indicate that, unlike on the font canopy at Trunch, there was always this central hole, and it did not drop to a pendant (see fig. 6.2).³¹

Trade in Oak Boards to England 1200–1700,” in *Trade in Artists’ Materials: Markets and Commerce in Europe to 1700*, ed. J. Kirby, S. Nash, and J. Cannon (London, 2010), 42–49.

³⁰ Salzman, *Building in England down to 1540*, 571. The 1520 indenture for the rood loft at Great St. Mary’s church in Cambridge makes the same distinction: S. Sandars and E. Venables, *Historical and Architectural Notes on Great St. Mary’s Church together with the Annals of the Church* (Cambridge, 1869), 64–67.

³¹ Howard and Crossley thought that both the St. Peter Mancroft and Trunch font canopies housed telescopic covers. There is little evidence that this was originally the case at Trunch. F. E. Howard and F. H. Crossley, *English Church Woodwork: A Study in Craftsmanship during the Medieval Period A.D. 1250–1550* (London, 1927), 325–26.

The Mancroft font canopy is much reduced from its original format, and has been subject to an unknown number of phases of alteration and restoration. Most prominent visually now is the complete replacement of the superstructure of the font canopy, described by Francis Bond as “largely modern work.”³² The upper reaches were installed in 1887–1888 by Frank T. Baggallay and were modelled on the only other surviving East Anglian font canopy, at St. Botolph’s, Trunch (Norfolk).³³ This conspicuous imitation can make the relationship between the two hard to bottom out, though there are many differences, not least the Trunch canopy’s hexagonal format and emphasis on foliate carving. The claim was made by Frank T. Baggallay’s relative, St. Peter Mancroft’s vicar Frederick Baggallay, that “every piece of the old oak” was retained in the new work.³⁴ Although it is hard to assess the validity of this, there are some signs of sensitivity in the treatment of the lower parts of the structure. For example, repairs to damaged finials have been backed with hessian (fig. 3.7) and small oak inserts used to make good the damage to an earlier phase of repairs to the canopy which saw the patching up of image niches on the pillars (fig. 3.8).³⁵

[INSERT FIGURES 7 AND 8 ABOUT HERE. IF THEY DO NOT FIT IN THIS SPOT,
PLEASE CONNECT THE NEXT PARAGRAPH TO THE ONE ABOVE.]

The polygonal, slightly jutting pedestal of these niches demonstrates that they once housed figures carved out of the body of the wood. Given their deliberate removal, these were likely

³² F. Bond, *Fonts and Font Covers* (London, 1908), 301.

³³ Baggallay, *Short Account*.

³⁴ Baggallay, *Short Account*, 7.

³⁵ Although it should be noted that neither of these repairs can be securely dated, the patina of the oak repair to the insert is consistent with that of the replaced canopy top.

saints, displayed in a manner reminiscent, albeit on a different scale, of the tin-relief saints found on the vertical uprights of many Norfolk rood screens (fig. 3.9).

[INSERT FIGURE 9 ABOUT HERE.]

The oak inserts, therefore, cover iconoclastic damage to the figures. There is good evidence they are an early repair, but they are not original. They are made of hand-sawn oak and are nailed into position using hand-forged iron nails. As described above, one of the inserts is of sufficient age to have received a repair of its own, likely in the 19th century. The use of nails contrasts with the original structure of the canopy, which is put together using wooden dowels. While oak could be sawn by hand in any era, these likely predate machine- or water mill-powered sawn oak, which began in the 17th century. They are covered with early paint which conforms to the shape of each niche, indicating that they were painted once they had been nailed into place. Close examination of the best-surviving paint on the filled niches reveals no overall design or figural composition. Lamentably, they are flaking badly (fig. 3.10). It is most likely that they were painted to resemble fictive stone or wood.

[INSERT FIGURE 10 ABOUT HERE.]

Dating the Font Canopy and Relating It to Other Works

East Anglia has a large quantity of surviving late-medieval painted woodwork, with over six hundred rood screens, parclose screens, tower screens, chancel screens, pulpits, font canopies, and covers still in situ in the region and further examples, too, in local and national museums.³⁶ A significant proportion of these can be dated from a combination of surviving will bequests,

³⁶ Wrapson, *Patterns of Production*, 575–698. The Victoria & Albert Museum (London) and Norwich Castle Museum possess examples.

churchwardens' accounts, and inscriptions.³⁷ Medieval screens in the region had clear trajectories of style attributable to specific if largely unnamed craftsmen and their workshops. Groupings of related screens can be placed in this dating framework, and I have done this for all screens mentioned here.³⁸ This presents a rich evidence-based regional backdrop in which to position the font canopy, its design, and its decoration.

The font canopy was previously dated to both the 15th and 16th centuries.³⁹ A 16th-century date is demonstrated by a number of details, as well as the overall complexity and interest in surface detailing when compared with earlier font canopies, a feature found in Tudor-period carving and architecture.⁴⁰ Perhaps the most direct indication of date can be found on the

³⁷ Taking into account inscribed dates, named donors, and will bequests, 112 screens in Norfolk, Suffolk, and Cambridgeshire have some dating evidence. This represents about a fifth of all surviving material. See S. Cotton, "Mediæval Roodscreens in Norfolk—their Construction and Painting Dates," *Norfolk Archaeology* 40, no. 1 (1987): 44–54; S. Cotton, H. Lunnon, and L. Wrapson, "Medieval Rood Screens in Suffolk: Their Construction and Painting Dates," *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute for Archaeology and History* 43, no. 2 (2014): 219–34.

³⁸ Lucy Wrapson, "Towards New Methodological Approaches for Examining Rood Screens," in *The Art and Science of the Church Screen in Medieval Europe: Making, Meaning, Preserving*, ed. Spike Bucklow, Richard Marks, and Lucy Wrapson (Woodbridge, 2016), 45–70.

³⁹ The canopy is dated 15th-century by Howard and Crossley, Cautley and Mortlock, and Roberts and 16th-century by Cescinsky and Gribble: H. M. Cautley, *Norfolk Churches* (Ipswich, 1949), 229; Howard and Crossley, *English Church Woodwork*, 325–26; D. P. Mortlock and C. V. Roberts, *The Guide to Norfolk Churches* (Cambridge 2007), 215–16; Cescinsky and Gribble, *Early English Furniture*, 158.

⁴⁰ Robert Beech describes Tudor-period roofs as favouring decoration and artifice over structure. R. Beech, "The Hammer-Beam Roof: Tradition, Innovation and the Carpenter's Art in Late Medieval England" (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2015), 254. Jacques Heyman discusses the artifice and illusion used in the structure of Henry VII's chapel: J. Heyman, "The

PMA panels, supposing that the case for their connection with the Mancroft canopy is accepted. In the decorative tracery above the figures are shields which depict alternating roses and pomegranates, the symbols of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon (r. 1509–1533—marriage to annulment). Henry and Catherine’s symbols survive on a range of objects, such as the silver-gilt belt chape or buckle belonging to Ralph Felmingham, one of the king’s sergeants-at-arms, now in the Museum of London.⁴¹ Henry sought annulment of the marriage from 1527 until 1533. Arguably, therefore, the panel imagery is likely to place the font canopy between c.1509–1527, while Catherine remained in favour.

The design of the font canopy also supports this date range. Critical to this are the use of shallow Tudor-style arches, comparable to those found in the work of Suffolk/Essex carpenter Thomas Loveday at St. John’s College, Cambridge, dated to c.1516 (fig. 3.11).⁴² Loveday’s work displays the complexity of decorative brattishing at this date, a feature shared with the St. Peter Mancroft font canopy as well as with the one at Trunch, which is usually dated to c.1500 on stylistic grounds (see plate X).⁴³ Shallow Tudor arches are also found on regional screens

Structure of the High Vault of Henry VII’s Chapel,” in *Westminster Abbey: The Lady Chapel of Henry VII*, ed. Tim Tatton-Brown and Richard Mortimer (Woodbridge, 2003), 219–26. These are ideas that underpin Tudor design, certainly at the elite level.

⁴¹ Museum of London. <https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/discover/pomegranate-and-rose-henry-viii-and-katharine-aragon>. Accessed February 2021.

⁴² For a brief biography of Loveday, see J. Harvey, *English Medieval Architects: A Biographical Dictionary down to 1550* (Gloucester, 1987) 189–90.

⁴³ N. Pevsner and B. Wilson, *Norfolk 1: Norwich and North-East* (New Haven, 1997), 700. Howard and Crossley suggest that the Trunch canopy is the later of the two, but stylistic and jointing evidence suggest it is the earlier. Howard and Crossley, *English Church Woodwork*, 325–26.

such as those at Loddon (Norfolk) and Wellingham (Norfolk), the latter of which is dated 1532.⁴⁴ Castellations are a common feature found on East Anglian rood screens, usually as part of window-type tracery. It is comparatively rare for them to be rounded and curved rather than straight-edged and these may well have been inspired by continental curvilinear design.⁴⁵ As well as on the posts of the font canopy, castellation can be seen regionally on the rood screen at Hadleigh in Suffolk (figs. 3.12 and 3.13). The use of curved machicolations under battlements and of cruciform arrow slits for crossbows (“oilets”) is reminiscent of the post bases on Norfolk screens with firm dates such as Ludham (1493) and Trunch (1502) (figs. 3.14 and 3.15). In the event of future conservation treatment, dendrochronology could be undertaken. It is likely that only the tracery heads would have sufficient year rings to be able to yield a date.

[INSERT FIGS. 11 THROUGH 15 ABOUT HERE.]

Although the Mancroft canopy and that at Trunch remain the only two surviving canopies in East Anglia to share the overall structural similarity of a polygonal form supported on legs, the most compellingly similar wooden furnishing in the region is found at St. Peter’s church Hepworth, Suffolk.⁴⁶ Hepworth’s font cover differs in overall design from the St. Peter Mancroft font canopy, and has been subject to major restoration, but I contend that its overall concept and carvings suggest both were the product of the same carpentry workshop (fig. 3.16). The octagonal cover stands over three metres high and was originally telescopic, though it now

⁴⁴ A. Baker, A. Ballantyne, and P. Plummer, *English Panel Paintings, 1400–1558: A Survey of Figure Paintings on East Anglian Rood Screens* (London, 2011), 199–200.

⁴⁵ For examples see E. M. Kavalier, *Renaissance Gothic: Architecture and the Arts in Northern Europe, 1470–1540* (New Haven, 2012).

⁴⁶ J. Bettley and N. Pevsner, *Suffolk: West* (New Haven, 2015), 306–7. See also D. P. Mortlock, *The Guide to Suffolk Churches* (Cambridge 2009), 235–36, and chapter 10 of this volume.

survives in two parts. The lower parts comprise a tabernacle structure with carved tracery heads, bases, and pierced buttresses. The carving style and motifs of these connect closely with the St. Peter Mancroft canopy. The tracery bases consist of small-scale fortresses with windows, oilets, castellations, machicolations, and little open doors containing figures going in and out (figs. 3.17 and 3.18). Shallow Tudor arches are also present on the cover, as are many tracery designs closely resembling the Peter Mancroft canopy (figs. 3.19 and 3.20). The delightful figures entering and leaving the fortress doors at Hepworth give an idea of how Mancroft's pillars must once have appeared, though likely peopled with saints and not soldiers.⁴⁷

[INSERT FIGS. 16 THROUGH 20 ABOUT HERE.]

Hepworth's font cover was much altered in 1855, when it is recorded that the Rev. H. G. Hand had it restored by a carver from Hopton called Mr. Brooke. Information in the church guide states that at this point, several layers of paint were stripped off, some of the panels were replaced with copies of the old work, and a cross was placed on the top. The stripping of paint from the exterior was highly successful—only a very few traces can be found. More paint survives on the interior, where both red and green alternating panels and a column's barber's pole motif can be seen. There is evidence of a further restoration, which may have postdated a fire in the church in 1898, at which point the font cover was physically carried out of the church. Despite these interventions, and despite Bond's contention that the cover is mainly the modern work of a local carver, it is typically clear where the original begins and ends.⁴⁸ The 14th-century

⁴⁷ J. Bettley and N. Pevsner, *Suffolk: West* (New Haven, 2015), 306–7. See also D. P. Mortlock, *The Guide to Suffolk Churches* (Cambridge 2009), 235–36.

⁴⁸ Bond, *Fonts and Font Covers*, 299.

date given in the church guidebook is erroneous. More accurate dating can be found in Bettley and Pevsner, who date the cover to 1500–1520.⁴⁹

Paint Schemes on the Mancroft Font Canopy

The paint schemes on the font canopy are highly fragmentary. The paint is rarely continuous and the layer structures complex and not always reliably relatable between samples. Subsequent layers and coatings have seeped beneath fragmentary paint, disrupting interpretation of paint sequences and layer structures. The medium of the paint is likely oil, although this has not been tested via instrumental means.⁵⁰

This interpretation of the technical evidence constitutes the current best fit of the physical evidence to the visual and documentary historical record, but it remains speculative. This attests to an object worked and reworked over the centuries since its original making, where paint schemes have been added and also partially and totally removed. The layers and schemes are a testament to the change in religion at the Reformation as well as changing mores and tastes in church furnishing over time.

Table 2 provides a list of the samples and their locations. Sample PM1 was taken from grey overpaint found over what appears to be an original red layer on the northeast pillar of the font canopy (fig. 3.21). This sample consists of two layers only. There is no evident ground layer present. This could be an artefact from the taking of the sample—which may have fractured and

⁴⁹ Bettley and Pevsner, *Suffolk: West*, 306.

⁵⁰ Staining tests were made on the cross-sections using Rhodamine B, counter-staining for protein with Amido black 2. See: I. C. A. Sandu, S. Schäfer, D. Magrini, S. Bracci, and C. A. Roque, “Cross-Section and Staining-Based Techniques for Investigating Organic Materials in Painted and Polychrome Works of Art: A Review,” *Microscopy and Microanalysis* 18, no. 4 (2012): 860–75.

therefore may not have included the lower layers—but equally, ground layers may not have been applied everywhere on the structure or, in this case, original paint may have been stripped from this surface before the scheme was applied. The red here is likely original and comprises vermilion and red lead, as well as several large lead soap formations. The blueish-grey layer is a non-original repaint and consists of lead white, chalk, red lead, and lamp black, and there is evidence from occasional surviving particles visible in dispersion that it contains indigo, most of which has faded. There is no evidence of a varnish or surface dirt between the two layers.

PM2A/2B comes from non-original paint schemes, as it was taken through paint layers on one of the brown/grey painted wooden inserts on the pillars (fig. 3.22). The lowest layer consists of a chalk ground. On top of this is a grey layer consisting of red lead, charcoal, and lead white. Although this grey is similar to that found on samples on the font and on the main body of the canopy, it differs in the use of charcoal black instead of lamp black, and no indigo was found. Over this grey layer, a dark paint was applied containing a copper-based pigment in particulate form and charcoal black, the former perhaps acting as a drier for the latter. As it is incorporated into a black paint, the exact nature of the copper has not been determined. A red-brown glazy paint consisting of earth pigments, red lake, and chalk was applied over that, which could represent a phase at which this part of the structure was grained to mimic wood or painted to resemble fictive stone. This presence of a red lake could point to a connection to the first phase of the font repaint, and the red lakes in the font and font canopy dispersion samples are visually similar.

The sample split at the interface between the brown paint and a further layer on top of it. Remnants of the brown layer can be seen at the bottom of the second sample fragment (PM2B). Over this is a blue layer consisting of the pigment smalt mixed with lead white and chalk. This

layer constitutes a second scheme. The presence of the smalt has some implications for the date of this second scheme. Although instances of its use have been found earlier than the late 15th century in European painting, in England smalt is habitually a pigment found after the Reformation.⁵¹

Despite concerted efforts to look for it, no instances of the use of smalt have been found on East Anglian screens.⁵² The smalt would once have looked blue, but is now grey, as it is known to degrade.⁵³ This sample indicates two paint schemes are present on the non-original inserts on the pillars. The second of these contains the smalt and is likely to predate the early/mid-18th century, which saw the invention and widespread uptake of a new, cheaper, and more reliable blue pigment, Prussian blue.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Among the earliest uses of smalt identified in England is on the 1545 portrait of Sir William Butts by John Bettes. R. Jones, “The Methods and Materials of Three Tudor Artists: Bettes, Hilliard and Ketel,” in *Dynasties: Painting in Tudor and Jacobean England 1530–1630*, ed. K. Hearn, exhibition catalogue, Tate Gallery (London, 1995), 231–35.

⁵² Wrapson, *Patterns of Production*, 348.

⁵³ For the degradation of smalt, see: M. Spring, C. Higgitt, and D. Saunders, “Investigation of Pigment-Medium Interaction Processes in Oil Paint Containing Degraded Smalt,” *National Gallery Technical Bulletin* 26 (2005): 56–70. For the history of the use of smalt: H. Stege, “Out of the Blue? Considerations of the Early Use of Smalt as Blue Pigment in European Easel Painting,” *Zeitschrift für Kunsttechnologie und Konservierung* 18 (2004): 121–42; M. Richter, “Smalt in Polychromy and Painting of German-Speaking Countries: Study on the History, Technical Sources and Composition,” in *Historical Polychromy: Polychrome Sculpture in Germany and Japan*, ed. M. Kühnenthal and S. Miura (Munich, 2004), 175–203; B. Mühlethaler and J. Thissen, “Smalt,” in *Artists’ Pigments*, 2:113–30.

⁵⁴ Harley, *Artists’ Pigments*, 73.

PM3 also comes from non-original paint schemes on the wooden inserts on the pillars. However, this time, it was a red-coloured paint that was sampled, from the lower wooden insert on the north-eastern upright. In this case, the two lowest layers were found to be closely comparable to the paint buildup on sample PM2. There is a chalk ground followed by a grey layer made of lead white, a charcoal black, and occasional particles of red lead. On top of this is a thin layer of red ochre, again mixed with a pinkish red lake. This sample does not have the complexity of layers found on PM2, seemingly lacking the secondary paint scheme, which may have been cleaned off or never applied in this location.

PM4 was taken from a gilded foliate boss under one of the posts of the west pendant. Here, three layers are found. The lowest is a grey layer comprising lead white, some chalk, and lamp black. Over this is a yellow ochre– and lead white–containing mordant layer and, above that, a layer of gold leaf. None of the lower original layers were found in this sample, perhaps indicating that they had already been removed from this part of the canopy when this decoration was added. The use of genuine gold leaf in what appears to be an oil gilding technique indicates that this intervention likely predates the 19th-century invention of gold paints.

PM5 was taken from one of the internal faces of the northeast pillar from an area visibly overpainted with grey/blue. There is no evident ground layer present, but the sample may have fractured and therefore may not have included the lower layers. Equally, it is possible that ground layers may not have been applied consistently everywhere on the structure. The lowest layer here is brown, likely a preparatory layer consisting of clays and silicates. Above this is a verdigris layer and there are subsequent overpaints. The earliest of these is an azurite layer also containing lead white and some lead soaps. Over this is a grey layer consisting of lead white, chalk, lamp black, and indigo, comparable to the indigo-containing grey layer found in sample

PM1. Each of these layers likely marks a separate campaign or phase in decoration, although there is no obvious surface dirt or organic coating such as varnish between them. The paints were not applied wet-in-wet, as they do not intermingle. In addition, unless taken from an intersection or overlap between paint schemes, where paint might have been accidentally brushed onto an adjacent surface, finding a blue paint over a green and a grey/blue over a rich azurite blue is highly unusual and suggests that repainting occurred.⁵⁵

Sample PM6 was taken from the internal part of one of the vertical pillars close to its intersection with the tracery head of the canopy (fig. 3.23). Here, the lowest layer consists of red lead and lead white. This may not be the ground layer, as it appears to be oil-bound, but it could be a preparatory or intermediate priming layer. On top of this is a layer consisting of verdigris, chalk, and lead white. The top part looks brownish and discoloured and contains less copper. It is likely this is more medium-rich. On top of this is a gold leaf layer, giving some indication of the original decoration. The two uppermost layers are closely comparable to PM5 and consist of a layer of azurite and lead white followed by a grey layer of lead white, lamp black, red lead, some red earth, and some indigo.

⁵⁵ The painting of blue pigments such as azurite and indigo over a red underlayer is an established medieval practice seen in wall and panel painting in England: Howard, *Pigments of English Medieval Wall Painting*, 45, 61. A red underlayer was also found beneath an indigo layer on the transom of the Cawston rood screen, Norfolk (unpublished analytical results). A grey underlayer applied, like the red, to enhance the covering power of azurite was found on the tomb tester of the Black Prince at Canterbury Cathedral: M. L. Sauerberg, R. Marchant, and L. Wrapson, “The Tester over the Tomb of Edward, the Black Prince: The Splendour of Late Medieval Polychromy in England,” in *Monumental Industry: The Production of Tomb Monuments in England and Wales in the Long Fourteenth Century*, ed. S. Badham and S. Oosterwijk (Donington, 2010), 161–86, esp. 175.

PM7 was taken from one of the posts on the north-eastern pillar, which was decorated with a fictive marbling. The lowest layer of the paint here consists of lead white, lamp black, chalk, and some red lead. The upper layer is a mixture of red lead, vermilion, and red lake. It appears comparable to PM4 in that the lowest surviving layer is likely not original. The sample also has much in common with PMF3 from the font stem, especially in the appearance of the vermilion/red lead/red lake blend when compared to sample PM1. It is possible that the columns were stripped and repainted in the same campaign of painting as the first campaign on the font.

PM8 was taken from an area of pale non-original blue paint on one of the tracery heads on the east side (fig. 3.24). The sample consists of a reddish lower layer made up largely of chalk and earth pigments. Staining tests using Amido black 2 indicate that this layer is protein-bound. This, therefore, may constitute an original preparatory or ground layer. On top of this is an original gold leaf layer. The layer above, however, is closely comparable to the non-original grey layer found elsewhere, comprising lead white, chalk, lamp black, and a little red lead.

PM9 was taken from an area of green decoration on the capital of the interior vaulting shaft of the north-east pillar. At the lowest part of the sample, there are remnants of a previous layer, which was perhaps removed before the application of the paint layers here. On top of these fragments is a lead white layer, probably a priming or regrounding. Over this is a synthetic copper green, likely a verdigris. The upper part of this copper-containing layer appears to be more medium-rich and less particulate, as is often the case with copper green layers.⁵⁶ All layers here are likely non-original, though early in date.

⁵⁶ This is commonly found on East Anglian screens: Wrapson, *Patterns of Production*, 350. For this type of application in English medieval wall painting, see Howard, *Pigments of English Medieval Wall Painting*, 88–89.

Interpreting the Paint Schemes on the Font and Font Canopy

The Original Scheme

Unlike on the font, there are parts of the font canopy on which original late-medieval paint survives (PM 1, 5, 6, and 8, figs 3.21, 3.23, 3.24). This scheme likely dates to between c.1509 and 1527, close in date to the making of the canopy. From the samples taken, there is limited evidence of a universal ground, but this is likely due to the difficulties of sampling on site and the highly fragmentary nature of the surviving paint on the canopy. In no case was an expected chalk/animal glue ground found.

Analysis of 122 medieval screens and related polychrome wood in East Anglia has revealed all the ground layers to be chalk-based and white in colour, containing occasional small quantities of gypsum.⁵⁷ Only one example included a mixture of chalk and ground glass, and in no case was red ochre and chalk found.⁵⁸ This ground is likely consistent with local practice. However, its universal presence throughout the painted schemes cannot be determined from the number of samples taken in the course of this study.

In two samples, PM5 and PM8, a brown preparatory layer consisting of clays and silicates was found, but this is unlikely to be the original lowest ground layer and it also finds some comparison in the results found in samples from the PMA panels (fig. 3.23 and fig. 3.24).

It is possible to make some statements about the fragmentary original scheme, most of which is traditional and typical of East Anglian painting practice. Green and red alternate in

⁵⁷ Wrapson, *Patterns of Production*, 339–41 and 541–42. The original survey has since been supplemented with analysis from screens at Hardwick, Wighton, Foulde, and Hunstanton in Norfolk, as well as the angel roof and rood screen at Cawston.

⁵⁸ Wrapson, *Patterns of Production*, 355.

opposition on the pillars' tracery, and there are also traces of a lead white layer visible on them. Although sampling has not definitely found any original blue, we can surmise that the inside of the vault was blue with gilded elements. The colour scheme is consistent with the polychromy on font covers and canopies throughout East Anglia, including the use of gold leaf as decoration.⁵⁹

Later Schemes

The presence of a high-quality azurite-containing paint directly over the original green (and, in one case, gilding) in two locations on the posts indicates an early alteration (PM5 and PM6) (fig. 3.23). This can probably be dated to the first half of the 16th century.⁶⁰ It is likely, though it cannot be said with certainty, to have been a response to changes to the font canopy c.1547–1553 in response to Royal Injunctions issued at the start of Edward VI's reign.⁶¹

The first scheme of paint on the wooden inserts repairing damaged image niches on the pillars (PM2 and PM3) could be part of the same secondary intervention which saw the layer of azurite applied to the pillars and vault, or it could be distinct: it is impossible to know for sure. The inserts themselves were painted from scratch using a traditional painting technique similar to that found on the region's screens. A chalk ground was applied, and over this a grey layer of chalk, lead white, charcoal, and red lead. In PM2, this was supplemented with a dark black layer of charcoal black and a copper drier, followed by a brown made of yellow ochre (fig. 3.22). In

⁵⁹ Much of the paint on the Trunch font canopy is original, although a visible second scheme of whitewash is present.

⁶⁰ This would assume that supplies of high-quality azurite persisted in Norwich until c.1548 or later.

⁶¹ E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400–1580*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, 2005), 450–54.

PM3, a red ochre was applied on top over the grey. It is therefore thought that the image niches were patched up and then painted to mimic stone.⁶²

The layer of smalt over the brown on the insert sampled in PM2 constitutes a secondary scheme (fig. 3.22). This layer was not found in any other samples. This restoration may have been only locally applied or it may have been cleaned off other areas of the font canopy prior to the next restoration. It is possible that discolouration of the smalt layer, if it was once widespread on the canopy, may have prompted further restoration, as what would have started out as a strong purplish blue degraded to a grey-blue. The smalt survives in comparatively good condition where it was sampled, on the inside of a pillar out of the light.

A blue/grey layer is visible on many parts of the canopy structure and in several of the samples (PM1, 4, 5, 6, and 7, figs 3.21 and 3.23). It comprises a lamp black and lead white paint mixture, with chalk and a little red lead. In PM1 and PM5 it also contains indigo on a chalk substrate, most of which has faded, a situation that might render it difficult to detect in the other samples.⁶³ This layer seems to lie over the secondary scheme, which appears to have been applied c.1547–1553 in response to iconoclastic damage (for example PM5 and PM6), although the paint on which it lies in PM1 might be original.

Other paints are associated with the layer. On the decorative spandrels (PM8), the floriated termini are gilded with gold leaf over an ochre mordant painted over this same blue/grey (fig. 3.24). The latter is materially and visually consistent with the lowest layer found on the font, where it is associated with the depiction of what appears to be a “pulpit” (PMF1),

⁶² It would be interesting to sample any remains of paint behind the wooden inserts if the opportunity were to arise.

⁶³ Polarised light microscopy has demonstrated this.

perhaps the last surviving part of the cycle of figural imagery that prompted complaints about idolatrous renovations, the documentary evidence of which is explored in depth in chapter 6 (fig. 3.3).⁶⁴ This is a scheme of painting on the font and font canopy which might be best linked to a major intervention of the 1620s.

The Font, the Font Canopy, and the PMA Panels

The surviving font canopy and the PMA pieces are convincingly the output of the same carpentry workshop, of whose work a further example can be seen at Hepworth, Suffolk. Although it is far from clear how the PMA pieces originally fitted into the font canopy, the combination of their St. Peter Mancroft provenance and the fact that they are multifaceted points to their once having been part of the same structure, perhaps posts around the drum of the upper canopy. A drawing made by Ninham in 1847 indicates further now-lost points of structural and stylistic comparison between the fragments and the canopy pillars as they survive in St. Peter Mancroft (plate X).⁶⁵

The paint analysis undertaken on both sets of objects is complex and difficult to interpret.⁶⁶ It is not certain whether the exact same schemes can be seen on both objects, although there are several points of concordance so it is likely. For example, it does seem possible that both have similar original verdigris layers and gilding, as well as a similar brown layer beneath the original verdigris. Likewise, there is some evidence of lead white regrounding on both before further verdigris was applied. There is also a blue/grey later overpaint on each as

⁶⁴ M. Reynolds, *Godly Reformers and Their Opponents in Early Modern England: Religion in Norwich, c. 1560–1643* (Woodbridge, 2015), 131–55, 186–213, 236–50.

⁶⁵ See the introduction to this volume.

⁶⁶ See chapter 5 of this volume.

well, though it is materially somewhat different between the canopy and the PMA panels due to the presence of different blue colorants.

The sheer number of paint schemes found on both font canopy and PMA panels is perhaps telling in itself. It was only certain types of wooden structure and objects that would be repainted repeatedly through the change in religion of the 16th and 17th centuries, a testimony to the continued relevance of the Sacrament of Baptism in the Church of England, but perhaps also to a shared history between these now-dispersed objects.

Appendix

Table 1. Samples from the font

Sample name	Sample site
PMF1	Yellowish painted ‘box-like’ structure, through all layers
PMF2	Red colour above the ‘box-like’ structure, through all layers
PMF3	Red painted decorative marble column
PMF4	Black paint at the edge of font decoration
PMF5	Black paint at the edge of the column decoration on the font
PMF6	Blackish-red painted area of hacked back stone on the font

Table 2. Samples from the font canopy

Sample name	Sample site
PM1	Grey overpaint on top of red, NE pillar
PM2	Brown/grey paint on the upper wooden insert, NE pillar
PM3	Red over brown from lower wooden insert, NE pillar
PM4	Gilded spandrel on the west side
PM5	From west side internal pillar with grey/blue overpaint on top
PM6	From grey/blue over blue and green, SE pillar
PM7	From NE side pillar, fictive stone decoration
PM8	From blue/gilding, east side spandrel
PM9	Original green decoration, NE side

Additional caption information

Fig. 3.3. Sample PMF1 taken from the painted ‘box-like’ structure, through all layers. Normal light photograph 200× magnification. From the lowest layer up: 1. Plaster consisting of both

calcium carbonate and calcium sulphate; 2. Plaster, second layer, materially same as lower layer; 3. Medium rich layer, possibly an oiling out or sealant layer; 4. Lead white, chalk and lamp black with occasional red lead particles; 5. Lead white and single azurite particle; 6. Yellow ochre, charcoal black.

Fig. 3.4. Sample PMF5 taken from black paint at the edge of the column decoration on the font. Normal light photograph 200× magnification. From the lowest layer up: 1. Plaster consisting of both calcium carbonate and calcium sulphate; 2. Lead white, chalk, yellow ochre and lamp black, occasional red lead particle; 3. Earth pigments including umbers, chalk and charcoal black.

Fig. 3.21. Sample PM1 taken from grey overpaint on top of red on the north east pillar. From the lowest layer up: 1. Vermilion, red lead and some large lead soaps; 2. Lead white and lamp black with occasional particles of red lead.

Fig. 3.22. Sample PM2 A and B taken from the brown/grey paint on the upper wooden insert, NE pillar. Normal light photograph 200× magnification. This sample split at the interface between the brown layer and the blue layer on top of it. From the lowest layer up: 1. Chalk ground layer; 2. Lead white, charcoal black and a little red lead; 3. Charcoal black, but found to include copper-containing particles identified using SEM/EDS; 4. Earth pigments (iron oxide red). Continuing on Sample 2b: 1. Earth pigments (iron oxide red); 2. Lead white and smalt.

Fig. 3.23. Sample PM6 taken from the grey/blue paint over blue and green, SE pillar. From the lowest layer up: 1. Red lead and lead white; 2. A second, glazier and more medium-rich layer of the copper green; 3. Gold leaf; 4. Azurite; 5. Blue/grey layer containing lead white, earth pigments and some lamp black.

Fig. 3.24. Sample PM8 taken from blue/gilding on the east side spandrel. Normal light photograph 200× magnification. From the lowest layer up: 1. Brown layer containing clays and silicates which also acts as a mordant for the gold leaf; 2. Gold leaf; 3. Lead white, lamp black, chalk and red lead; 4. Largely organic, dark brown surface coatings.