



The Hundred Parishes

An introductory article about PARGETING

The buildings of the Hundred Parishes display a range of traditional construction methods and materials, some dating back many centuries. A notable feature, rarely found outside East Anglia, is pargeting (alternatively spelt pargetting with a double t).

Pargeting is decorative render applied to the face of a building, either “incised”, where a pattern has been cut or pressed into plasterwork, or “raised”, where an image has been attached to the wall. Either type may have been crafted by hand in situ or created first using a mould or template. The incised forms are basic and not expensive, unlike the elaborate raised forms.

There are several fine and varied examples across the Hundred Parishes. Perhaps best known are the 17th-century raised images on the former Sun Inn in Saffron Walden, shown on this page.

The decoration of one face of the building includes two giant figures, shown below. Their identity is a matter of debate.



The Old Sun Inn's decoration also includes various birds and plants – even a little dog.



Also dating from the 1600s is the raised decoration on The Crown House, Newport, shown on the left.

The building was once an inn and legend (albeit without evidence) suggests that King Charles II may have spent time here with his mistress, Nell Gwynn. A few years later, the inn was renamed as The Crown and the pargeting added, including a crown above the door.



A fine example of incised patterns can be seen in Braughing, where panels of different patterns cover the face of The Old Forge, pictured below.

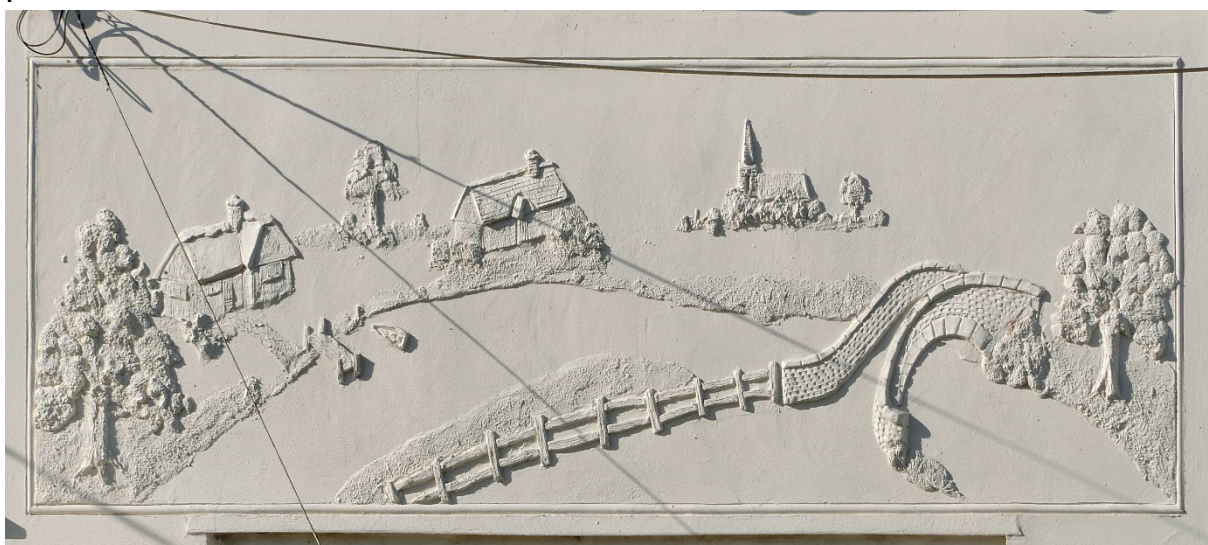


In Linton High Street, 15th-century Chandlers or Chaundlers has a mixture of small, ancient raised panels and extensive, more-modern incised patterns.

The face of the building is shown on the right and detail of one ancient panel below. Imagination is required to decipher the characters or story.



The art of creating and conserving pargeting is now pursued by only a few craftsmen. Two imaginative modern designs are shown below: the first in Gold Street, Saffron Walden and the second in Radwinter. Radwinter has older pargeting on its almshouses and parish hall which were built in 1874 after a disastrous fire.



The image below shows 21st century pargeting on The Old House in Newport.



Another, relatively new design can be seen in Monk Street, a hamlet within Thaxted parish. This coloured parget appears, appropriately, on a house called Spaniels.

We have mentioned just a few specimens, old and new. Other parishes also have examples of pargeting. We hope that this article may alert you to the wealth of pargeting that we enjoy locally.



A series of videos, “How to do pargeting”, appear on YouTube. This initiative by local pargeter Anna Kettle was partly funded by a grant from The Hundred Parishes Society. The videos can be watched on <https://www.youtube.com/@AnnaPargeter>

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Any comments or suggestions for improvement may be submitted by using the Feedback form on the website. The website has many short articles on various aspects of The Hundred Parishes, as well as introductions to individual parishes and to a number of local celebrities, and an extensive What's On section. More than a hundred walk route descriptions can be freely downloaded, with each of the hundred parishes featuring in at least one walk.