



Just as the stories of ordinary people are so often lost in the noise of royalty and aristocracy so too is the majesty of our vernacular architecture lost in the shadow of palaces and churches. The vernacular is that built in the local tradition with locally available materials and skills. We spend the morning in picture postcard Thaxted - a veritable Smörgåsbord of English vernacular architecture, with morning coffee and lunch at an old hotel. In the afternoon, a country tour and visit to two spectacular cathedrals of wood.

Meet the Blue Badge Guide in Thaxted at 10.30am. Prosperous already by Saxon times, many mediaeval buildings survive from three boom centuries in the cutlery trade. On some of the timber framed houses are important examples of the decorative plasterwork, typical of the region, known as pargeting.

On a gentle stroll from the hotel we seek out examples of house types from different ages and make the distinction between vernacular and other styles.

A house that is not vernacular is 'polite' - it has been designed in a 'conscious' style that could be built using local

materials, in any part of the country. An excellent example of the polite style is Georgian. In Thaxted we find a wide variety of vernacular and contrasting polite architecture in a compact and attractive setting. We also discover that the modern trend for *green* buildings harks back to the vernacular taking us full circle down the local materials and local tradition path. It's good fun and very absorbing. There are great stories too, with Gustav Holst and the Red Vicar among the one time locals.

Back to the hotel for a two course lunch - we'll ask you to pre-book from a short list of three mains and two desserts. In the afternoon we visit the massive and beautiful Cressing Temple Barns built for the Knights Templar. These colossal buildings are so ancient that they were built when Genghis Khan and St Francis of Assisi walked this earth. There's also a Tudor walled garden to enjoy and time to buy tea in the tearoom run by the Tiptree Jam people. You'll be ready to make tracks for home at 4.30pm.

"There is no town in north Essex - and very few in England - to equal in beauty, compactness and juxtaposition of mediaeval and Georgian architecture, the town of Thaxted". Sir John Betjeman

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