

SECTION 'F' – A GUIDE TO THE CHURCH AND CHAPEL

External

Before entering St Edmund's Church it is worth considering some of its external features. The Greek (Corinthian) revival church was built in 1836/1837 and was dedicated on 14 December 1837. It is identical in many respects to the Church of St Francis Xavier at Hereford which opened in 1839, unsurprising because both were designed by the architect Charles Day. One difference between these churches is apparent – the one at Hereford has no windows, a design that prevented rioters throwing missiles inside. St Edmund's does have windows although these might be considered to be above a height to attract such wilful acts! The interior dimensions of St Edmund's Church make it an imposing building, 81' x 41'9", its height being 35'11" {measurements of 24.69m x 12.8m x 11m}. The Ketton stone quarried in Rutland creates a somewhat austere façade but on top of the Church the stone cross symbolises this as the house of God. Mainly at the expense of Sir Pierce Lacy, the original cross was replaced at a cost of £15 4s 6d in 1921 due to cracks appearing in the stone and its dangerous state. Additional funding came from parish donations and profits from a whist drive and a garden fête.

A new flagstaff was erected on 3 March 1902, to recognise the Anniversary of the Coronation of Pope Leo X111 and two new flags costing £3 11s 0d were purchased in 1921.



Within the Presbytery Garden are the headstones of three Jesuit priests, Fathers Cole, Lane and Jenkins who were amongst the many listed in *'The Present From Our Past'* who cemented Catholicism in Bury St Edmunds from the time our Chapel was built. The Garden appears to have been the original place of their burial although the headstones which had previously been in the Crypt were cleaned and moved to their present location around 2015.



The International Year of the Disabled occurred in 1982 and was also marked with a visit on 28 May by Pope John Paul II, the first occasion of a reigning pope coming to the United Kingdom. Fr Wace had recognised the need for an access point for disabled visitors and a side entrance to the Church was created. The sum of £2,500 towards the target total of £5,500 was raised by a parishioner Philip Pitcher through a sponsored cycle ride covering 420 miles. On 23 July 1982 Bishop Alan Clark officiated at Mass at which the sick were anointed. A brick within the wall alongside the ramp provides a reminder of these events.

Internal

Many people pass through the porch without appreciating the history it depicts. Attention is immediately drawn to the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes which was donated in 1883 by Captain William Rushbrooke. The gold halo 'Je suis l'immaculée conception' commemorates the apparitions of Our Lady that had commenced 25 years earlier. The statue came from the firm of Perry and Company, London, is 5'8" {1.7m} high and stands on a pedestal. At the time of its unveiling the statue was within the rails at the east end of the Sanctuary.

In the late 20th century the statue was restored by a parishioner, Helen McIldowie-Jenkins. She described her amusement on taking it back to the Church: "*On the day I returned the newly restored statue to the Church, it had to be carried past the presbytery dining room window. It was lunchtime and the three priests inside who were having lunch just saw only the top part of the statue as it went past the windows - they rushed outside to see what was going on - they thought they were having a group vision of Our Lady!*"

The Rushbrooke family were great benefactors to St Edmund's and the plaque in the porch depicted in Section 'B' commemorates their association with the Church.

Your attention will be drawn to another memorial, that of Hon Charles Berney Petre who was born 17 December 1794 at Writtle, Essex. Little is known about his association with the Church apart from him being a member of the family Petre who were amongst the most prominent Catholics in the Country and who did much to perpetuate the faith and the building of places of worship.

He was the son of Robert Edward Petre, 10th Baron Petre (1763 – 1809) of Thorndon Hall, Essex. His mother was Mary Bridget Howard (1767 – 1843) and his maternal grandmother was Juliana Molyneux (sister of the 12th Duke of Norfolk). He was the second of seven children.

On 31 May 1822 Hon Charles Berney Petre married Elizabeth Howard (born 1801) at New Church, Mary-le-bone (*Bury and Norwich Post and Suffolk Herald* 15 June 1822). *Genealogical Collections: Roman Catholic Families of England* describes her as the natural daughter of Edward Charles Howard of Nottingham Place in the Parish of St Marylebone, Middlesex; her death being shown as 5 September 1835 aged 34 years, with her burial at Ingatestone three days later. As reported in the *Bury and Norwich Post and Suffolk Herald* 9 September 1835 she died in tragic circumstances:

'A shocking accident occurred near Tilbury Fort on Friday. The Hon Chas Petre of Shenfield with Mrs Petre, their son and daughter and a female servant took a boat to be put on a Margate steamer when by the unskillfulness of the ferryman the boat got under the paddle and was upset. They were all taken up by a Gravesend boat and carried ashore in a senseless state from which they were restored by proper attention; but on Sunday Mrs Petre who was in delicate health was about to enter a boat to return home when the idea of recrossing the river gave her nerves such a shock that she was suddenly taken worse and died in a few minutes. Mr Petre remains very ill and the nursemaid is in a dangerous state'.

What brought Hon Charles Berney Petre to Bury St Edmunds, when, why and the extent of his good works are questions that lack real answer but what is clear from Church and media records is that he became an esteemed member of the local community and that his family connections with the town were established:

- At the point of Census 1841 Hon Charles Berney Petre was at Hurley Street, Marylebone, London with his mother Lady Petre 70 years and members of his mother's family/household
- His signature appears as a witness to the marriage of William and Lucy Bocock at the Registrar's Office, Hatter Street and afterwards at St Edmund's Chapel on 4 August 1845
- In 1846 he was living at Northgate Street (*Kelly's directory 1846, page 1382*)
- Louisa Frances Petre (his daughter) was godmother at the Baptism on 29 November 1847 of William Charles Bocock
- He attended balls and dinners and in 1849/50 was a vice-patron of the Athenaeum
- The Census 1851 showed he was at Leamington with his son Charles Edward Petre and members of his son's family/household
- On 10 June 1853 he was one of six people nominated by the Town Council to become a Magistrate. However, he subsequently declined to qualify for this position. The Magistracy of the town was at that time subject to fierce debate amongst members of the Council and allegations
- He was a prominent member of the Liberal party
- He enjoyed the company of his family (he attended The Fair Ball at the Assembly Rooms along with Miss Petre, Captain and Mrs Petre – *Bury and Norwich Post and Suffolk Herald* 11 October 1853)
- He was connected to those in the agricultural community and was listed as a holder of a Game Certificate (*Bury and Norwich Post and Suffolk Herald* 19 September 1838)
- He enjoyed watching cricket matches in Bury St Edmunds

Hon Charles Berney Petre died on 18 June 1854 aged 59 years, having lived at Highland House, Northgate Street, Bury St Edmunds (this was part of the Duke of Norfolk's Estate and later became the Wesleyan Middle Class Boys' School – pictured on page 53 of Margaret Statham's book *Yesterdays Town Bury St Edmunds*).

His death was announced in the *Bury and Norwich Post and Suffolk Herald* 21 June 1854:

'On the 18th instant at his residence in Northgate Street in this town, in his 60th year, the Hon Charles Petre 2nd son of Robert Edward, 10th Lord Peter, and uncle to the present peer'

An extract from the report in the *Bury and Norwich Post and Suffolk Herald* 28 June 1854 gave greater detail of his death and funeral:

'The remains of the late Hon Charles Berney Petre were interred on Saturday last at the Catholic Chapel in this town, of which an ancestor of the deceased was the original founder. The procession from the residence of the lamented gentleman (conducted by Mr Hunter) consisted of the hearse, preceded and surmounted by plumes, and three mourning coaches, in the front of which were Captain Petre, son of the deceased (chief mourner), the Hon Robert Petre and Hon Francis Petre, his brothers; and Lord Peter, his nephew; in the second, Lord Stafford, Mr Michael Blount and the Rev Henry Weld; and in the third his medical attendants, Messrs Smith and Wing. Many houses along the line of procession and elsewhere had their shutters closed. Sir Thomas and Lady Gage, Sir Thomas Cullum, Captain and Mrs Rushbrooke, and other families of the neighbourhood, with many of the tradesmen of the town, attended at the Chapel, to shew their respect for a gentleman who, during his residence in this place, was held in the highest estimation for his charity to the poor and his kind and gentlemanly deportment to all classes. The service of the Roman ritual was performed by the Rev Mr Jarrett; and the body in a coffin handsomely covered with velvet and ormolu furniture was deposited in the Crypt under the Chapel. We are requested to publish the following letter from Captain Petre:

Sir – Having been informed that a number of tradesmen in Bury had their shops closed, or partly so, during the Funeral of my lamented Father on the 24th inst, I beg through your paper to return my sincere thanks to them, and also to those inhabitants who out of respect to his memory attended the last service.

Your obedient Servant, Charles E Petre.

His son's comments echoed those of his family who subsequently installed a commemorative plaque in the porch of St Edmund's Church. The translation of its Latin wording gives credence to the account that he is buried in the Crypt:

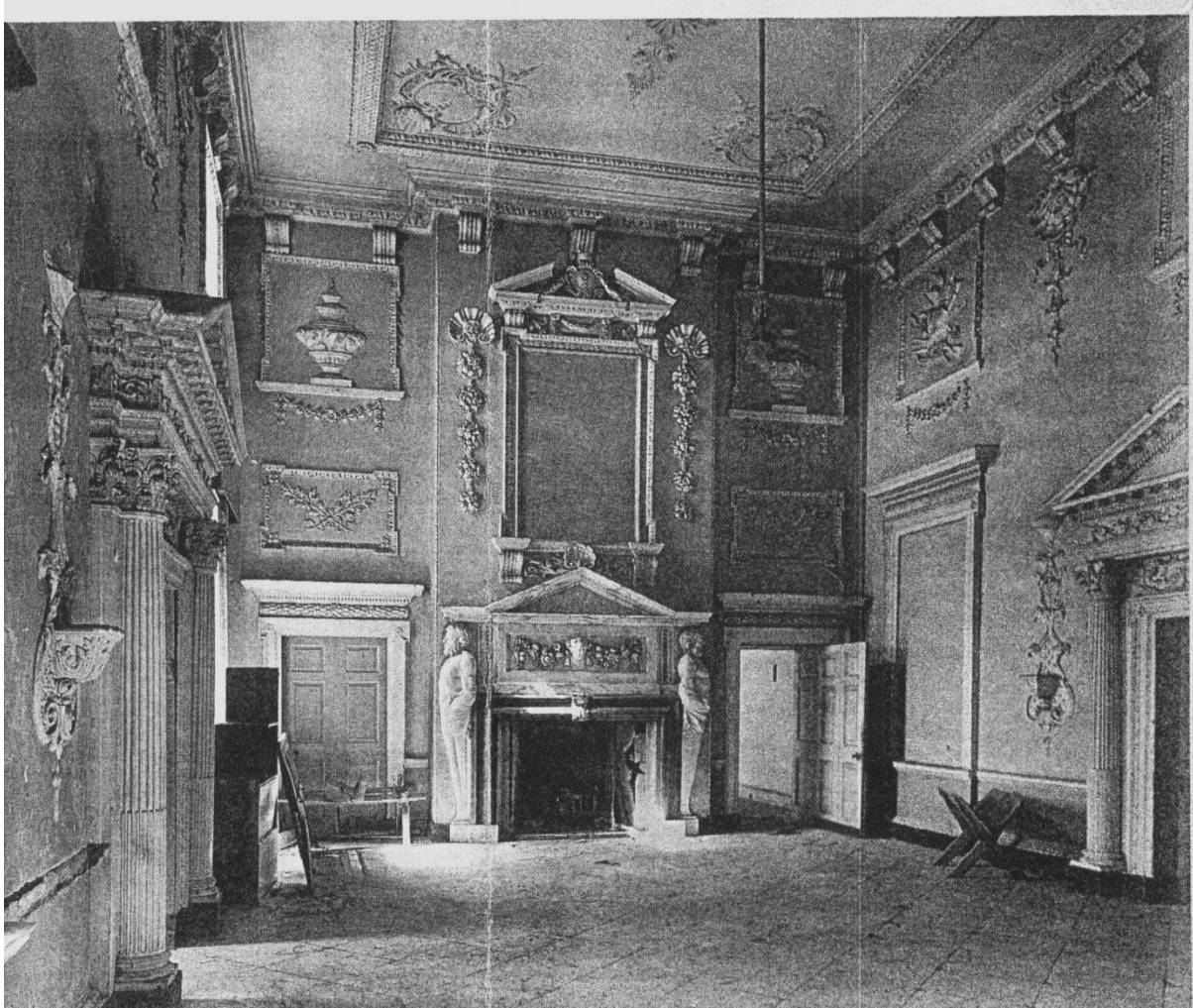
He who believeth in me although he shall be dead shall live (St John chapter XI verse 25)
 Pray for the soul of
 Hon Charles Petre
 Who died 18th June 1854
 He is buried in the Crypt of this Church
 In whose memory his children have erected this memorial
 May God grant mercy on his soul

A further plaque commemorating Hon Charles B Petre was placed in the Crypt but unfortunately this escaped the notice of two parishioners who around 1973/74 were engaged to carry out refurbishment. During the course of this whilst laying a new floor they knocked a hole through into a vault where they saw a coffin. They described it as raised on two plinths, approximately 3' – 4' below floor level, apparently lead or metal with no sign of rusting, covered in material with a silver crucifix approximately 7" - 12" in its centre. No nameplate was visible but it appeared to be the remains of someone of nobility. They kept the matter secret apart from informing a member of the clergy.

Full details of the marble memorial to those who died in the First and Second World Wars are provided in Section 'G'.

Either side of the porch are stairways to the choir, one also providing access to the belfry. On 21 November 1896, the feast of the Presentation of Our Lady, Fr Jones rang the Angelus on the bell which had that day been erected on the roof of the Church. The bell, weighing 2 cwt 8 lb from Warnes was hired with an option of purchase and after being properly hung was rung on Easter Eve on 10 April 1897 for Regina Cæli. Originally the bell was manually tolled but these days its ringing is automatically generated without the need for physical exertion. It is perhaps worth remembering that during the days of repression the tolling of a bell in a Catholic place of worship would have been unlawful.

Although not a route of public access, it is possible to enter the Presbytery via the porch, passing through the small sacristy which now displays the carving of the Madonna presented by people from Peru and Bolivia in 1987 to mark the 150th anniversary of the Church.



The former Rushbrooke Hall showing its fireplace surround



The impressive entrance to the Church depicts two classical figures supporting a large marble portico, these having previously formed a fireplace surround of the now-demolished Rushbrooke Hall. Prior to the piercing in 1959 to create this central entrance, inner side doors (opposite the stairwells) were the only routes of access and egress, these since having been blocked off to provide a toilet and a storage cupboard. The funding for this derived from the bequest of £400 from Harold Martin, a parishioner who had endured total paralysis for five years. An anonymous donor also contributed £1,000.

Entering the Church one is immediately struck by its size and the beauty of the decorative work carried out in 2014. We suggest you start by standing beside the baptismal font for many of us the gateway to our journey of faith. The font and its wooden casing were donated around 1996 by Kevin Mayhew, a book and music publisher, who for many years also led the singing at folk masses.

Allow your gaze to travel around for an overall perspective.





To your left you will see the Lady Altar surmounted by the Carrara white marble statue of Our Lady. This was bequeathed to the Church by George Gery Milner-Gibson-Cullum (who died in 1921) in memory of his mother, Susannah Arethusa Milner-Gibson, who converted to Catholicism and who had died in 1885. The donor also left to the townspeople the Cullum library but his home at Hardwick Hall reverted to the Crown. Having been delivered by motor van to the Presbytery and set up in a guest room in 1922, the ownership of the statue initially proved somewhat controversial. Fr O’Gorman received a notice from Mr Cullum’s Solicitors Partridge and Wilson of this gift on 7 December 1921, when it was made clear that the gift was not to the Society of Jesus but to the Church as the

Mission. By a printed circular Fr O’Gorman obtained the votes of the parishioners preferring that this statue should stand within the public guest room. According to Fr O’Gorman, this was also made emphatic by one of the executors who had heard a rumour that it was intended to sell the statue. In 1925 the statue was moved to the porch before its current position.

Fr Houghton recorded that the statue was of Roman design and originated from the workshop of the renowned sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen, one of the major artists of the Neoclassical movement. Mrs Milner-Gibson died aged 71 in Paris but, as reported in the Bury Free Press of 7 March 1885 she was buried in Bury St Edmunds in 1885 having been an important benefactor to the Parish.

Two large door-cases from Rushbrooke Hall, in the style of William Kent, were used to frame the altar of Our Lady, creating two columns and a pitched heading, in which appear the words ‘Salve Porta Caeli’ translating as ‘Hail the gate of Heaven’. Symmetry is observed in the structure opposite surrounding the entrance to the Blessed Sacrament Chapel.

The marble altar itself was formerly dedicated to the Sacred Heart, having been provided in 1920 by Mr Henry Francis Harvey in memory of his son who had been killed at Ypres in 1917, more fully described in Section ‘G’. In 1879 a statue of the Sacred Heart was bought for £8.10s 0d but its ultimate location has not been traced.

The walls of the Church exhibit the Stations of the Cross which date from 1925. Various individual donors combined with members of the congregation to replace the former Stations of the Cross and these were supplied on 9 August 1925 by Maurice Vanpouille, 260 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London. Nameplates beneath 13 of the Stations gave an indication of people who subscribed in thanksgiving or to commemorate the memory of their loved ones, featured names including Arthur Eyre, Patrick Crosby, Barbara Floyd, Frank and Sarah Harman, Hilda Floyd, Blanche Manson, Harold Martin, Walter Rouse, Henry James and Emma Lucy Rolfe, Henry Francis Harvey, Mary Theresa Pemberton, Elizabeth

Rouse and Robert Grimmer. Upon redecoration of the Church in 2014 the names of the subscribers were removed but this record serves as a reminder of their past importance.

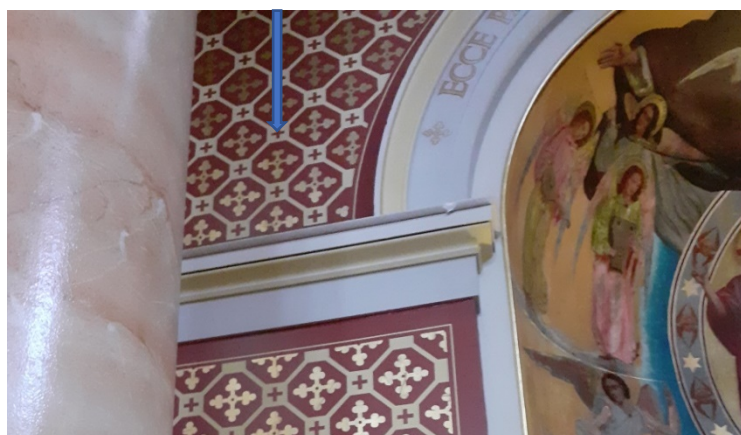
The original Stations of the Cross were designed in 1855, described in Latin and according to the Commemoranda were installed in 1876:

'I the under-signed blessed and erected the Stations of the Holy Way of the Cross in the Church of Saint Edmund, King and Martyr, on 24th November in the year 1876, with permission granted by the distinguished and Reverend Lord Bishop Francis Kerril Amherst. Joseph Lazenby, Missioner of the Apostolic Society of Jesus'

The rows of box pews, each bearing Roman numerals, are an increasingly rare survival and were the only ones of this design within the Catholic Churches of Suffolk. Within some can be found small compartments beneath the seats where the parishioner paying bench rent would be able to store prayer books and other personal items under lock and key. As stated in Section 'D', two of these compartments were discovered in the Presbytery cellar in 2019. The passage of time has also meant the removal of the bronze plaques that previously denoted the paying occupant of the pew, a practice that certainly existed until the late 1950s.

In addition to the pews, the beautiful pulpit and iron altar rails remain from the original state of the Church. In 1886 hangings for the pulpit were worked and given by Miss J Nunn and in 1921 it included a crucifix, 2'9" long, in carved wood and decorated, costing £2.18.6. The sanctuary would have held a warmer appearance in 1881 when Susanna Milner-Gibson provided a Brussels carpet. The Sanctuary was again carpeted in 1916 at a cost of £40 from funds raised by the congregation. Chandeliers within the Sanctuary were provided around 1913 by the Countess Cadogan and carpeting outside the Altar rails was donated by Mr Eyre in 1912.

The columns, on either side of the altar, were for some years painted over, but have now been restored and are similar to the pillars of Scagliola at nearby Ickworth House which are purely decorative. The construction of these contains a plywood frame plastered over with gypsum as it takes a good polish. Often, coloured pigment is included so as the plaster is spread the pigment streaks to give an appearance of marble. The Church pillars are therefore imitation and a very much cheaper product than using marble.



In the apse is the painting on copper which, according to Pevsner/Bettley, was the work of Robert Park of Preston in 1876. However, Whites History Gazetteer and Directory of Suffolk indicates it had 'recently been adorned with the painting'. It depicts the Ascension of Christ and is headed by the words '*Ecce panis Angelorum, factus cibus viatorum*' (*Behold the bread of angels, become the food of pilgrims*). At its base, the painting is marked 'Restored by G H Pettit Builder and Decorator etc HOU 4 12 21. The painting was subject to further cleaning and artistry in 2012. Those who are sharp-eyed

will notice that to the left of the apse, the stencilling bears the decorator's mark (the top of the arrowed cross is missing).

The original high altar which had been refurbished by Mr Pettit in 1925 at a cost of £41.17.0 has long since disappeared but it would have been the focal point of the Church. Its splendour incorporated a crucifix purchased in 1886; a new Tabernacle, installed in September 1896 which was blessed on the first of the following month and was enhanced on 1 June 1897 with the addition of precious stones set in silver gilt being placed in its door.

Walk to the sanctuary where you will be able to admire the beauty of the altar. It represents the final part of restoration work in 2014. The base slab, the Mensa and the columns of the altar were constructed from the former altar, thus maintaining linkage with the past. The previous altar contained relics of unknown origin that were sealed within by Bishop Parker when the Church was Consecrated on 31 March 1965 and these were transferred by Bishop Hopes at the dedication of the new altar on 28 April 2014. They were sealed into the floor of the new altar along with other relics symbolic to our parish. These include a relic of locally born St Alban Roe (see also Section 'E'), generously donated by the Sisters of Tyburn, this comprising a piece of sponge soaked in the blood of St Thomas Reynolds and St Alban Roe who died together. The provincial of the Society of Jesus provided a relic of St Ignatius of Loyola (see Section 'E'), the founder of the Jesuits, together with unauthenticated mementos as a symbolic link with the wider Church. The unauthenticated mementos are marked as "Ex S Petri, Apostle", "Ex S Pauli, Apostle" and "Ex Sep BVM".



Fr Philip Shryane described the significance of the adornment of the altar: *"The IHS emblem was one I saw in a small medallion in the chapel of Hothorpe Hall near Market Harborough. The important thing about it is that it is vertical, which I thought important as it is on a column, most other images of IHS are horizontal."* The adornment was the work of a parishioner Virginia Wright who, having studied glass and fine arts became self-taught in the craft of kiln formed glass using minerals including gold and enamel. At the request of Fr Shryane, and after the production of many prototypes, Virginia produced her exquisite pieces of work.

To the right of the altar stands the wooden lecturn which portrays the second example of Virginia Wright's craftsmanship. Fr Shryane explained, *"The emblem on the lecture is taken from the front of the deacons' book of the Gospels. IC XC are abbreviations in Greek and Slavonic for Jesus Christ. NIKA is a Greek verb that means 'conquer'. So 'Jesus Christ conquers', the victory of Christ that we celebrate is that over the world, the devil, sin and death. This is the great victory of the cross and resurrection which is found in the scriptures, hence*

it is often on the cover of the Bible and here on the place where the Bible is proclaimed for the people to hear."



On top of the altar is the St Thomas Cross (Mar Thoma Cross), an ancient depiction which belonged to the community of St Thomas Christians of Kerala, a state in India. The community traces its origins to the evangelistic activity of St Thomas in the first century, making it one of the oldest Christian groups of the world. The cross does not carry the effigy of Christ and through its elements symbolises life rather than suffering or death. It's four floral edges are indicative of fruition and life; the lotus flower beneath the cross is the national flower of India and a symbol of purity in both Buddhism and of Christianity in India; the absence of an image of Jesus on the cross acknowledges the empty tomb and Our Lord's resurrection; the dove above the cross represents the Holy Spirit, the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead and bestows gifts upon the faithful of the Church.

Within the Sanctuary you can also see the processional cross which will vary at times of the year. The traditional style crucifix with the Corpus was mounted on mahogany as described in Section 'J'. The other crucifix bears the image of Christ the amputee and symbolises our links with the people of Cambodia and Christ's solidarity with the suffering peoples of this world.



Three statues represent the minority communities of the parish. The Indian community commissioned a wooden statue of St Thomas, the Apostle of India. Hand-carved in Kerala and after the long journey to St Edmund's Church, the statue was blessed on the Saint's feast day on 3 July 2016 in front of a packed congregation.

In 2000 nurses from the Philippines were recruited to work at West Suffolk Hospital and over the next two decades their community grew in size. The statue of St Lorenzo Ruiz, the first Filipino Martyr was donated by the Filipino community and was blessed at Mass on his feast day on 25th September 2016. St Lorenzo was born in Binondo, Manila of a Chinese father and Filipino mother. As Catholics they brought up their son as part of the local church. Educated in part by the Dominican Friars, he became a member of the confraternity of the most holy Rosary. As a young man he married Rosaria and together they had three children. They led a peaceful, content and faithful life together, until in 1636 he was



falsely accused of killing one of the Spanish colonialists. In 1636 he left the Philippines for Japan where Christians were being persecuted. As a native Filipino he was not guaranteed a fair hearing and fled on board a ship bound for Japan with the company of missionaries, both religious and lay. There he was arrested, tortured and finally martyred by being hung for two days in extreme agony after valiantly refusing to give up his Christian faith. He was canonised by Pope John Paul II in 1987.



The feast day of St Lorenzo Ruiz in 2017 was celebrated at a special Mass followed by lunch, music and dancing in the Crypt.

Commemorating the Polish community is the statue of St Wojciech, the first Bishop of Prague to have been born in Bohemia. He became a missionary to the Hungarians, Poles and Prussians and was martyred in his efforts to convert the Baltic Prussians to Christianity. He was canonised in 999. On 23 April 1997 (his feast day) the 1,000th anniversary of his martyrdom was commemorated by a pilgrimage to the Saint's tomb in Gniezno, Poland.

Either side of the apse are credence tables both donated in 2014, one by the Catenians' Circle 362 Bury St Edmunds, the other in memory of the Pratt family.



To the left of the sanctuary is the parish library in which is displayed in a massive gilt frame a painting by Duckett depicting the Martyrdom of St Edmund, the original of which by Charles de la Fosse is housed in the Irish College in Paris having formerly been the reredos in the Chapel of the English Benedictine monastery in Paris until the French Revolution. The dying Martyr King is represented tied to a tree and angels are removing from his body the arrows by which his life has been destroyed. This was donated by George Gery Milner Gibson Cullum in 1878 and unveiled by Fr Lazenby on the eve of St Edmund's Day when it was hung directly over the pulpit.



A painting of Christ crucified was moved from the Church during 2014 to the Presbytery stairway.

The door to the right of the sanctuary leads to the main sacristy. As you turn away from the sanctuary there is much to view on the western side. The statue representing the martyrdom of St Edmund (pictured in Section 'E') was presented to the Chapel by Mrs Milner-Gibson and was unveiled on St Edmund's Day 20 of November 1877 by the Right Rev Francis Amherst, Bishop of Northampton. The occasion was described in the Bury Free Press four days later:

'Last Tuesday being St Edmund's Day, it being exactly a thousand and seven years since the good King of East Anglia suffered martyrdom at the hands of the Danes, a solemn ceremony was celebrated. Some time ago Mrs Milner-Gibson presented a handsome statue of the Royal Saint to the Church ... There was a large congregation to witness the ceremony. The altar had been more than ordinarily beautified for the occasion with flowers, ferns and other plants, while it was also fully illuminated, and very handsome drapery ornamented the front, in the centre of which appeared the borough arms, the device, however, being somewhat different to that which we are accustomed to see, it consisting of two wolves supporting a red shield, with the crown of St Edmund above it... The statue was then unveiled, and the Bishop with his priests took up their position before it, while the religious formularies adopted for the occasion were proceeded with; and arrows were fixed in the body of the statue by an attendant priest. ... St Edmund is represented in Royal robes, and suffering martyrdom at the hands of the Danes. The statue is about four feet high and now forms a handsome and conspicuous ornament to the Church ...'

Interestingly, the Jesuits' Commemoranda attributed the donor as being Lord Milner and there being a painting of the Saint gifted by his son (this would have been the picture referred to above, representing the martyrdom of St Edmund).

In close proximity is the icon of Christ Pantocrator, the version of Helen McIlldowie-Jenkins. It was a memorial commissioned in the late 20th century by a parishioner Mrs Peggy Whitehouse in memory of the lives of her son and daughter Roy Douglas (born 27 November 1943, died 20 February 1969) and Patricia Ruby Whitehouse (born 14 September 1948, died 18 January 1978).

In October 1960 an accident occurred during the construction of an extension to St Edmund's School; fortunately no fatalities resulted. In thanksgiving Fr Houghton provided the wall plaque inscribed '*Oct 1960 in thanks B H*'.

The first archway commences a series of framed tapestries that hang on the walls of the Church and are an important part of the history and heritage of West Suffolk, these being worked in 1970 to celebrate the 1100th anniversary of the martyrdom of St Edmund. Olga Ironside-Wood was a lady whose interests in the arts benefited Bury St Edmunds, most notably at the theatre and in the production of the town's pageant in 1959. She was an expert in costume and came up with an idea of creating the story of St Edmund as a tapestry in nine panels, each of which could be worked independently. She approached the chief education officer responsible for the secondary schools in the Liberty of St Edmundsbury (modern West Suffolk) and was delighted to receive his cooperation.

All the secondary schools in the area were approached and, under the care of Jane Page the regional representative of the Embroiderers' Guild, a panel was individually worked by the following:

- Beyton secondary school
- Clare secondary school
- Convent of the Assumption, Hengrave
- Girls' County grammar school
- Hadleigh secondary school
- Haverhill secondary school
- Ixworth secondary school
- Silver Jubilee Girls' school
- Sudbury Girls' High school

The outcome was the production of a colourful tapestry that was put on display in the St Edmund Chapel of St Edmundsbury Cathedral. However, in 2002 the wall on which the tapestry hung was demolished during the extension of the Cathedral and a new home was needed.

At the suggestion of the Cathedral guides the tapestries were gifted to our Church on behalf of the Cathedral by the Dean, the Very Rev James Atwell and they were accepted in May 2002. Following approval from the Historic Churches committee, the nine tapestries were framed and sited in the wall recesses of the Church. An ecumenical service to dedicate the tapestries was conducted by Fr Shryane on 23 January 2003. They continue to serve as a reminder of the life and martyrdom of our patron Saint and are an interesting chapter from the past - no longer do any of the named education establishments exist.

To the right of the door of the Blessed Sacrament Chapel we see an icon of St Alban inscribed '*In thanksgiving for St Alban's Catholic School*', donated by its governors upon closure of the School in 2000. The icon was another composed by Helen McIldowie-Jenkins. Further to the right is a statue of St Joseph.

Looking upwards towards the rear of the Church enables us to view the choir and organ loft. Beneath, divided by the fifth of the tapestries, are the statues of St Therese of Lisieux (purchased for £7 10s 0d which was blessed on the day of her canonisation 17 May and St Anthony of Padua, costing £7 which

was donated by Mrs Horne. These statues were installed in 1921. At ground level, either side of the entrance doors are cupboards where once stood the confessional boxes.

The somewhat hidden jewel of the Church is the Blessed Sacrament Chapel dedicated to the Immaculate Conception, referred to in Section 'B'. Over many years the religious significance of the Chapel had declined and it had been used as a storeroom, a kitchen and during the times of Fr Houghton it served as his study, adorned with a grand piano, expensive paintings and other comforts.

The Chapel was restored in the time of Fr Wace and was dedicated in August 1978 by Bishop Alan Clark who is seen in the picture (courtesy of Bury Free Press) admiring the monstrance which was within the Chapel.



Before entering, we observe two features of significance. First is the sanctuary lamp, its red light indicating the presence of the Blessed Sacrament but also reminding us that it was one of the early gifts to the Church, donated by Irish drovers who took cattle across Europe during the mid-19th century. They saw that the Church did not have a proper sanctuary lamp and provided one made of brass bearing the inscription '*Hibernae Donum Sancto Edmundo AD MDCCCLXXVI*' confirming the date of this '*Gift from Ireland*' as 1876. It is a quality that has remained as our generations have continued to welcome to our parish newcomers from whatever part of the world they come or whatever their circumstances.

Second, the entrance door which was created in 1978 and glazed by Stefan Oliver as a memorial to his mother who had recently died. She had been a member of the Suffolk County Council Education Committee and was a prominent figure in the establishment of the schools' pyramid. Stefan also dedicated the glazing as a memorial to his deceased father and sister.

The basis of Stefan's idea came from the side chapel of Coventry Cathedral where one steps through a metal crown of thorns that creates the doorway. His intricate design is notable for:

- Its centre: The traditional symbol of the Blessed Sacrament – the elevated Host and chalice, engraved '*Agnus Dei*' and the symbol '*Chi-Rho*' (abbreviated Greek meaning Christ); wheat ears symbolising the Bread of Life; a never-ending crown of thorns
- Each corner of the door shows the symbol of the patron saint of the schools of the parish: St Edmund; St Alban; St Louis; St Benedict. This recognises the major part Gabrielle Oliver played in the establishment and development of education in the parish
- Each pane depicting foliage of spiritual significance



Sadly, only the schools of St Edmund and St Benedict have survived the passage of time.

Mirroring the surrounds of the Lady Altar are the door-cases originally from Rushbrooke Hall which complete the entrance to the Chapel. The words above '*Ecce Ostium Ovium*' translate as '*Behold the gate of the sheepfold*' a quotation from St John's Gospel.

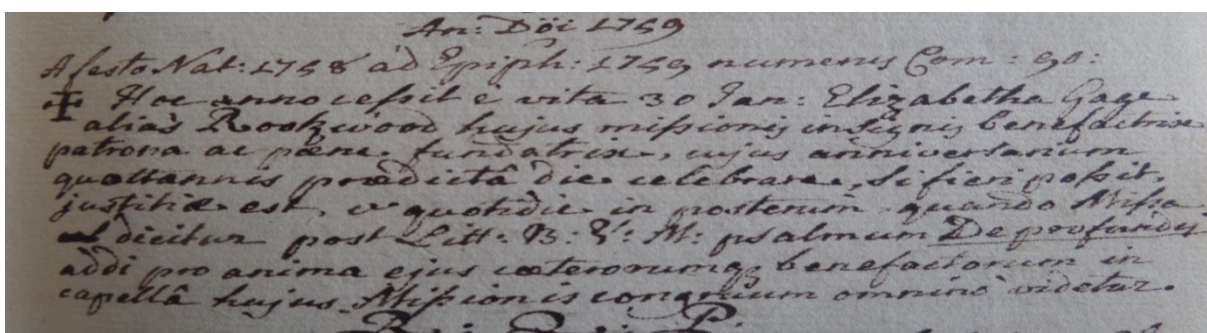
This is the gateway to a place of peace and prayer. Please acknowledge the presence of the Blessed Sacrament by genuflecting as you enter the Chapel, an expression of our faith in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. We especially ask visitors to respect the sanctity of the Chapel and to refrain from talking or otherwise distracting people at prayer.



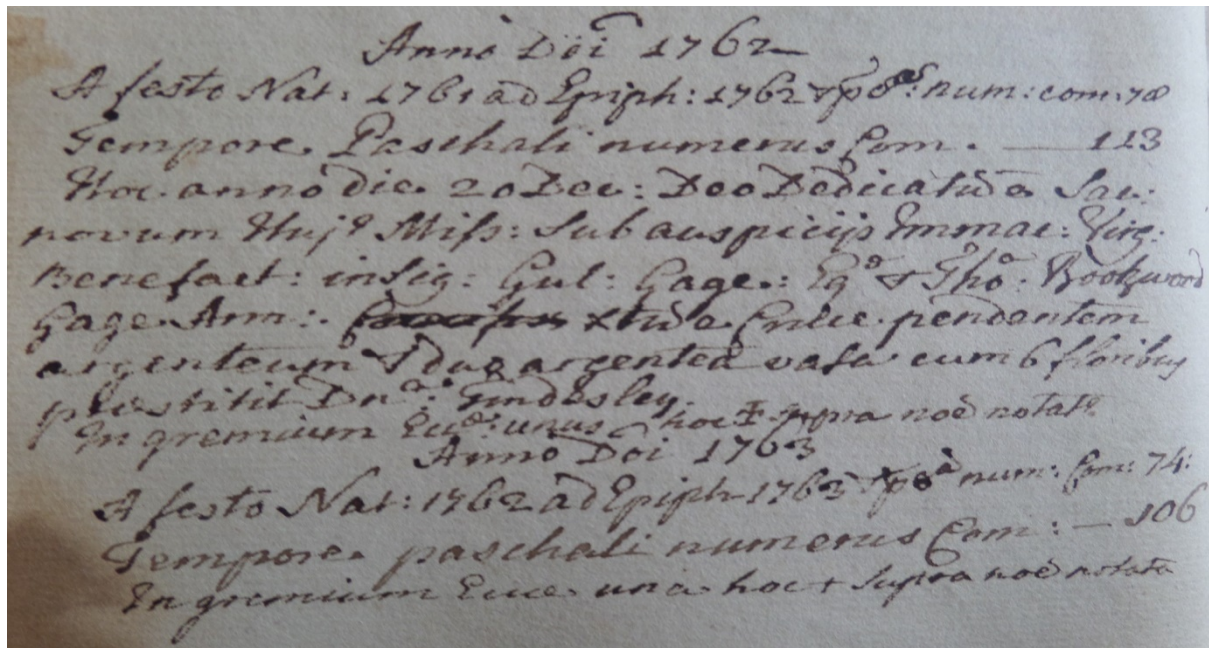
The Chapel before restorative work of 2012

The restorative work within the Chapel in 2012 included re-siting the tabernacle and altar, the sympathetic painting of the interior, raising the floor level and providing new seating. The only original features are the 'Strawberry Hill Gothick' cornicing, two Georgian windows and the gallery. The licence under the Second Catholic Relief Act of 1789 for the Chapel to be used as a place of Catholic worship can be seen in the Chapel together with the names of the parish priests who have served the community since its opening. The statue of St Edmund dates from the early 20th century but its origin is unknown. The wooden carving within the Chapel, seemingly dating from the early 20th century, of St Edmund (with two arrows, the third is missing) is of unknown origin. A painting from the School of Rubens depicts the crucifixion of Our Lord, this being donated by Sir Pierce Lacy.

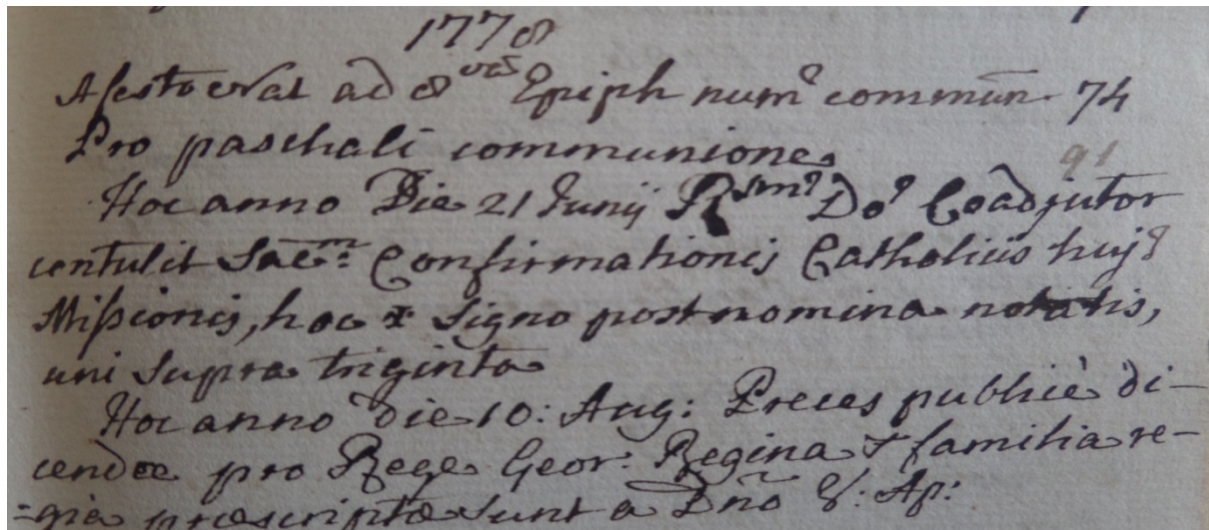
The Presbytery holds details of parish records for which we owe a debt of gratitude to Joy Rowe for ensuring their preservation. Amongst these is reference to the first Parish Register which records baptisms, marriages, burials and communion numbers between 1756 and 1797. It includes notes in Latin on the state of the Mission. Within are references to the death of Elizabeth Rookwood Gage:



The dedication in 1762 of the Chapel (with a description of the hanging cross and silver vase) is also mentioned:



In 1778 the offering of prayers for King George and the Royal Family took place. This was an unusual act but a demonstration of the desire of Catholics to demonstrate that adherence to their Faith did not involve disloyalty to the Crown.



The second register spans the years 1789-1832 and again includes the detail of those within the parish baptised, confirmed, married and deceased. The handwritten records represent the eras of priests of the parish: Frs Charles Thompson, P Jenkins, Thomas Angier, Henry Wright, John Laurensen, Joseph Tate, Henry Brigham, Bernard Jarrett, James Brownbill and Thomas Knight

It is interesting to note the choice of names by those confirmed in 1793. Of the 38 listed in the register of that year 9 chose Joseph, 2 James, 1 Francis, 1 John, 1 Charles, 13 Mary, 4 Anne, 2 Teresa, 1 Frances, 1 Martha, 1 Lucy, 1 Elizabeth, 1 Agnes.

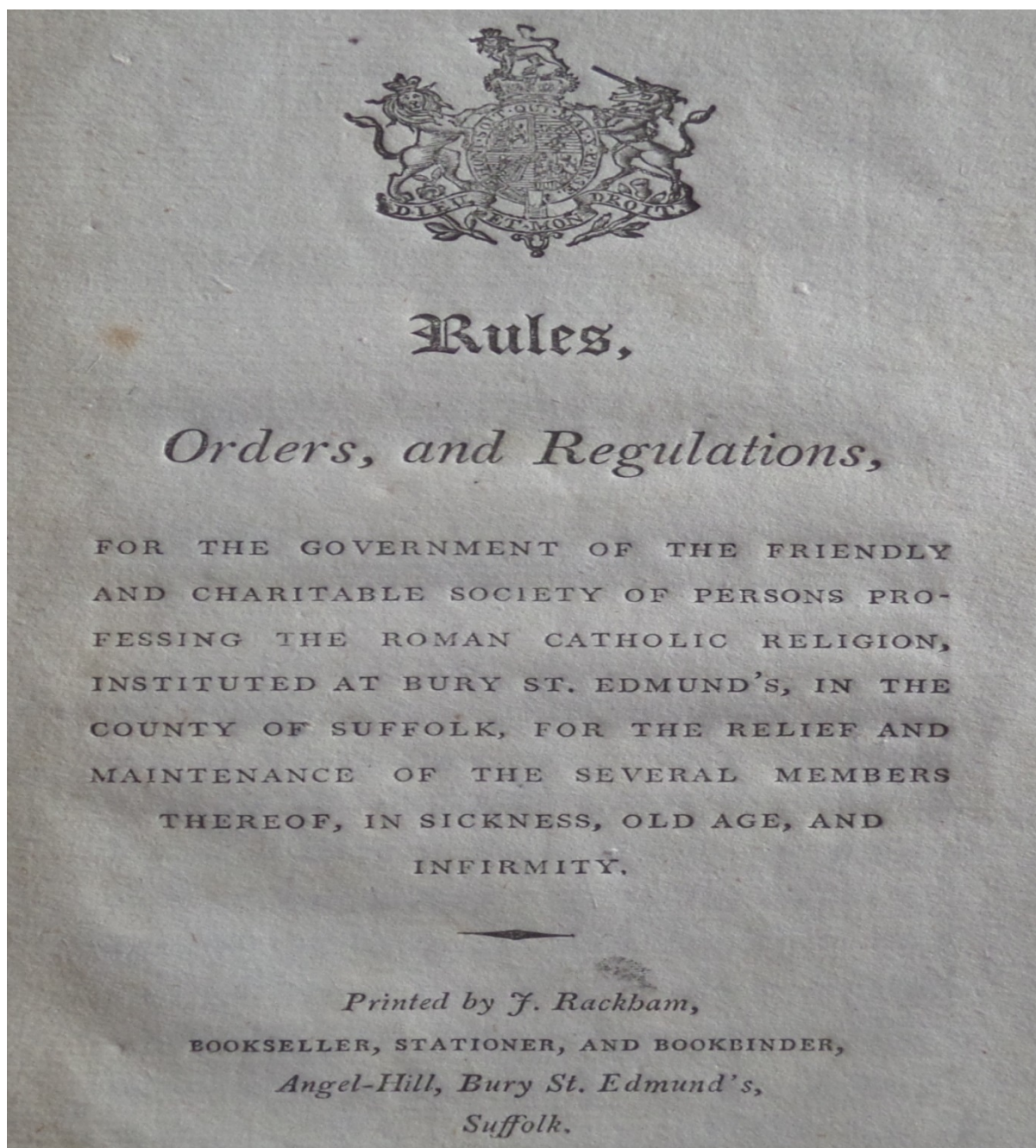
110		111	
Anno 1793 - 4 ^a Die Augusti		Anno 1793 - 4 ^a Die Augusti	
confirmati sunt separatim		Nomina	
Bapt.	Famil.	Conf.	
Thomas Wright	Josephus	15 Maria Clarke	Anna
Joannes Faulkner	Joannes	Sarah Holland	Maria
Joannes Fairer	Franciscus de Sales	Maria Perry	Maria
Abraham Steed	Josephus	Elizabeth Edington	Maria
5 Gulielmus Griggs	Josephus	Margarita Barham	Maria
Joannes Hasleton	Josephus Aloysius	20 Sarah Michaelfield	Anna
Thomas Harris	Carolus	Susann Androni	Lucia
Gulielmus Snelling	Josephus	Maria Coker	Anna
Thomas Holland	Josephus Francis	Anna Rebec Adams	Maria
6 Carolus Steward	Jacob (caro Carolus)	Maria Steward	Elizabetha
Joannes Barham	Josephus	25 Ursula Holland	Maria
Franciscus Steward	Josephus	Anna Jewers	Maria
Carolus Spenser	Josephus	Caroletta Peiffer	Jerava
Ignatius Harnd	Jacobus	Francisca Lest	Maria
		Susann Southgate	Anna
		30 Anna Cole	Maria
		Celia Annis	Martha

The third register covers the baptisms of the parish between 1888 and 1909, entries being made by Frs Parkinson, Perrin and Jones.

Year	Date	Name	Age
Anno 1801	Julij 3 ^e	Elizabetha Hunt	Et. 60
Anno 1802	Feb ^u 10 ^a	Jufenna Stewart	Et. 31
Anno 1802	Feb ^u 7 ^a	Sara Holland	
Anno 1802	Maj 6 ^e	Maria Brooker	obit munita
Anno 1803	Martii 1 ^e	Maria Southgate	o. r. m.
	Apr. 4 ^e	Elizabeth Oxir	obit munita
	Julij 17 ^e	Markiah Kingon	o. r. m. 71
	Julij 28 ^e	Jac Hunt	unctus tantum
Anno 1804	Jan 9 ^o 13	Car. Stewart Sen ^r	subito 76
	17	Maria Jewers	o. r. m.
	Feb ^u 13	Sarah Winkup	o. r. m. 36
	Martii 31 ^e	Gul. Southgate	o. r. m. 26
Anno 1805	Maj 21 ^e	Marg. Mwaite	uncta tantum
	Junij 23 ^e	Maria Melfon	o. r. m. Et. 86

Another document of interest relates to a Friendly Society established in 1794, governed by rules, orders and regulations:

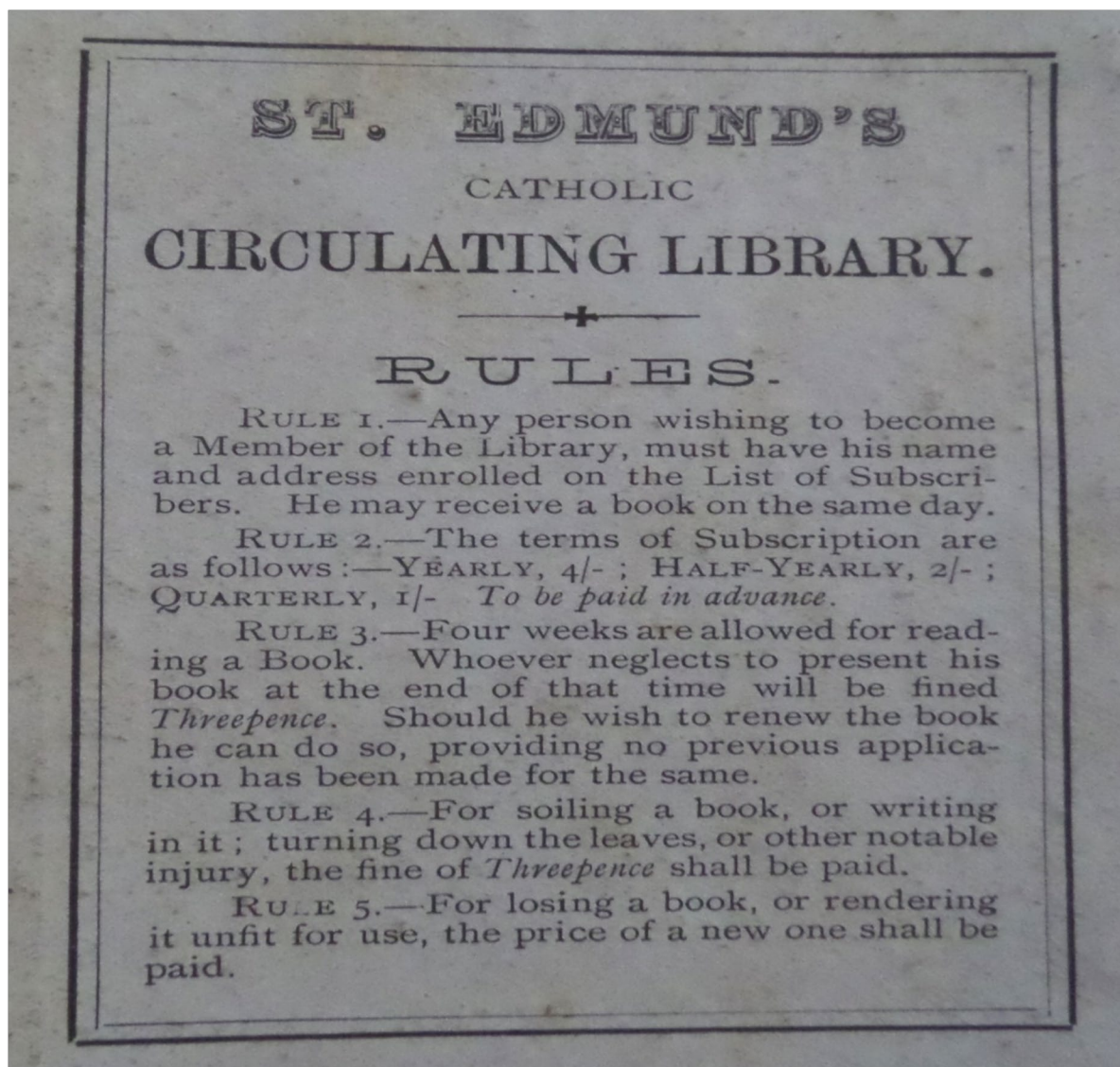
The booklet describes what a person might receive if unable to work; that £4 may be paid towards funeral expenses; six shillings to be paid to the bearers; the requirement to attend Church on Sundays and Holy Days and that any absence is punishable by a fine deposited into the overall fund. The annual meeting of the Friendly Society (held in a public house) required attendance, failure resulting in a fine of one shilling which had to be spent in the pub! No one was allowed to drink in the pub whilst business was ongoing, contravention being punishable by the payment of sixpence! The organisation was allowed and confirmed at the Quarter Sessions and became a legal entity:



SUFFOLK.—The general quarter sessions of the peace of our sovereign lord the King, holden by adjournment at Bury St. Edmund's, the 31st day of December, 1794, before John Ord, D. D. Capel Lofft, Esq. and others, justices assigned, etc.—This court doth allow and confirm the foregoing rules, orders, and regulations, pursuant to the directions of an act of parliament in that case made and provided.

By the court, Notcutt, dep. cler. par.

St Edmund's Church has always recognised the importance of books and other reading material. Amongst the materials rescued by Joy Rowe is a book entitled '*Histoire de la Chine*' which was at one time available through St Edmund's Catholic library. It bears the embossed marking 'St Edmund's Catholic Library Bury' but also has the handwritten name of P G Milner Gibson, one of the notable donors to the Church. Within the book's cover are the rules relating to the library:



Documents illustrating the nature of music used every-day and on special occasions within the Chapel have also been preserved. These include information about the original organ pipes and stops.

NB 4 Principal Pipes are
ground into the Open Diapason
viz B, Bb, A, Ab. Parsons has the pipe chests are
Double Winded = 74 Open Diapason Pipe value about £3.

		Pipes	
20+30	Stop Diapason =	58	Wood B A
20+30	Principal - =	58	Metal Bb Ab
	Fifteenth - -	58	Metal
	Open Diapason -	47	Metal
	Flute - - -	30	Wood 1/2 Blanks
	Dulciana -	30	Metal
	Clarinella -	30	Wood & Open
	<u>My Organ contains</u>	<u>311</u>	<u>Pipes (say 30%)</u>
	out of which there are	57	Pedal Pipes
	Deduct	4	
		<u>53</u>	

Included amongst the documents is the music used at the dedication of the Church in 1837 and for the Coronation.

Music has been an important element in our Church history, particularly through the enduring periods of tenure of our choir leaders and organists Mr A J Floyd, Miss Hilda Prigg and Dr Alan Rowe who between them served the parish for a period in excess of 150 years. The installation of a new organ in 1912 would therefore have been greeted with delight – the outlay of £587 was met through donations from Mr and Mrs Johnston, he being a blind musician, (£467), Miss Taylor (£50), the congregation (£35) and the sale of the old organ (£35). Three years later Miss Taylor made a further donation of £74 to provide organ blowing machinery.

No inventory of the assets of the Church has existed and therefore it has been necessary to rely on historic records to identify its other possessions over time.



The story of the Hoxne oak in the Presbytery Sacristy produces a situation of belief and counter-belief. The *Gentlemen's Magazine* 1848 mentions that wood from the oak at Hoxne, allegedly the tree to which St Edmund was tied, had been used to create an alms box within St Edmund's Church, Bury St Edmunds. This is the alms box donated by Percy Milner-Gibson which is now sited in the Presbytery sacristy. The veracity of this story needs to be viewed in the context of Sections 'D' and 'E'. This is elaborated on in the Commemoranda in which it stated that in 1878 Mrs Milner Gibson presented an alms box from the tree to which St Edmund was bound and tortured.

Legend records that Edmund fled to Hoxne where he fell into the hands of the victors, who offered him his life on condition of renouncing the Christian faith. Refusing to do this, the King was bound to a tree, beaten with clubs and shot at with arrows. Tradition long pointed out 'St Edmund's Oak' in Hoxne wood as the site of the King's martyrdom, and when this ancient oak fell down in 1848, an iron arrow head was found embedded in the trunk, which is believed to have been one of those discharged against the Royal Martyr. (This relic was exhibited at a meeting of the Royal Archaeological Institute at Bury St Edmunds in 1869 through the courtesy of Sir Edward Kerrison Bart.

Transcription of the Latin inscription on the brass plate of the alms box reads: *'From the wood of a tree to which the most blessed king and martyr, Edmund was bound for a very, very long time, flogged and pierced with arrows: the most renowned Knight Edward Kerrison made me and gave to the Church of St Edmund on 11th of October in the year 1878'.*



It is clear that in the late 1800s particular interest was shown from this Church in the life and relics of St Edmund. Were the clergy, parishioners and the likes of Mrs Milner-Gibson and Sir Edward Kerrison (Baronet and MP) deceived or is there credibility in this history?

Over the years, as a result of subscriptions from the congregation and friends outside Bury St Edmunds many improvements were made. In 1878 a set of High Mass vestments, colour red, were provided at a cost of £34. In October 1885 a set of vestments was given by the nuns of Roehampton and another set (red and purple vestments) by the Rev Fr Provincial. Another white vestment was purchased. In January 1886 a further three new vestments were given by the Rev Fr Provincial. In commemoration of her sister having professed at New Hall, on 11 October 1893 Miss Bevan presented the Church with a vestment. New High Mass vestments, colour white, were used for the first time on Easter Day 1898. In 1915 unspecified vestments were repaired at a cost of £20 and in the same year sets of green and black vestments and three palls were supplied by the Sisters of the Poor Child Jesus, Our Lady's Convent, Southam, Warwickshire.

In 1875 the old organ was replaced with the purchase of a new model; this was repaired in 1899. The organ was sold in 1912.

Redecoration of the Church and high altar took place in 1876 and in January 1886 the altar was redecorated and new linen supplied. The Church was cleaned in 1900 and the high altar was further decorated in 1926.

During his Visitation between 28 and 30 October 1881 the Very Rev Fr Provincial took away two pyxes and two sets of stocks for the Holy Oils, all of silver, to give to foreign missions.

The years of 1885, 1886 and 1887 saw several additions. Collections and donations from parishioners provided a new roof for the Chapel. In November 1885 a new Confessional was erected in the second sacristy and six new benches were put into the Church for the poor. In December two white altar veils, two book covers, new altar cards and artificial plants were also donated. In April 1886 a white book cover was created by Mrs Morphy who also donated Benediction books – it is not known if she was related to Rev Mr Morphy referred to in Section 'B'. In 1887 a new carpet around the Sacred Heart Altar was bought. Part of the old Library was converted into the Sodality Chapel.

The movement has not been recorded of a picture of St Lucy which was presented around 1898 by a parishioner, Mr Todd, or of the painting of Our Lady of Good Counsel which was hung in the Church and blessed by Fr Jones on 2 February that year, followed by a procession in honour of Our Lady.

In 1921 considerable activity, as previously described, took place including the provision of two votive stands and hangings for the Lady altar.

In 2017 currently held vestments and plate were photographed by David Bowden to ensure accuracy of future records and to create a catalogue of such possessions. It was also ascertained that within the East Anglian Diocesan archives is a chalice originating from the Rookwood family of Coldham Hall.

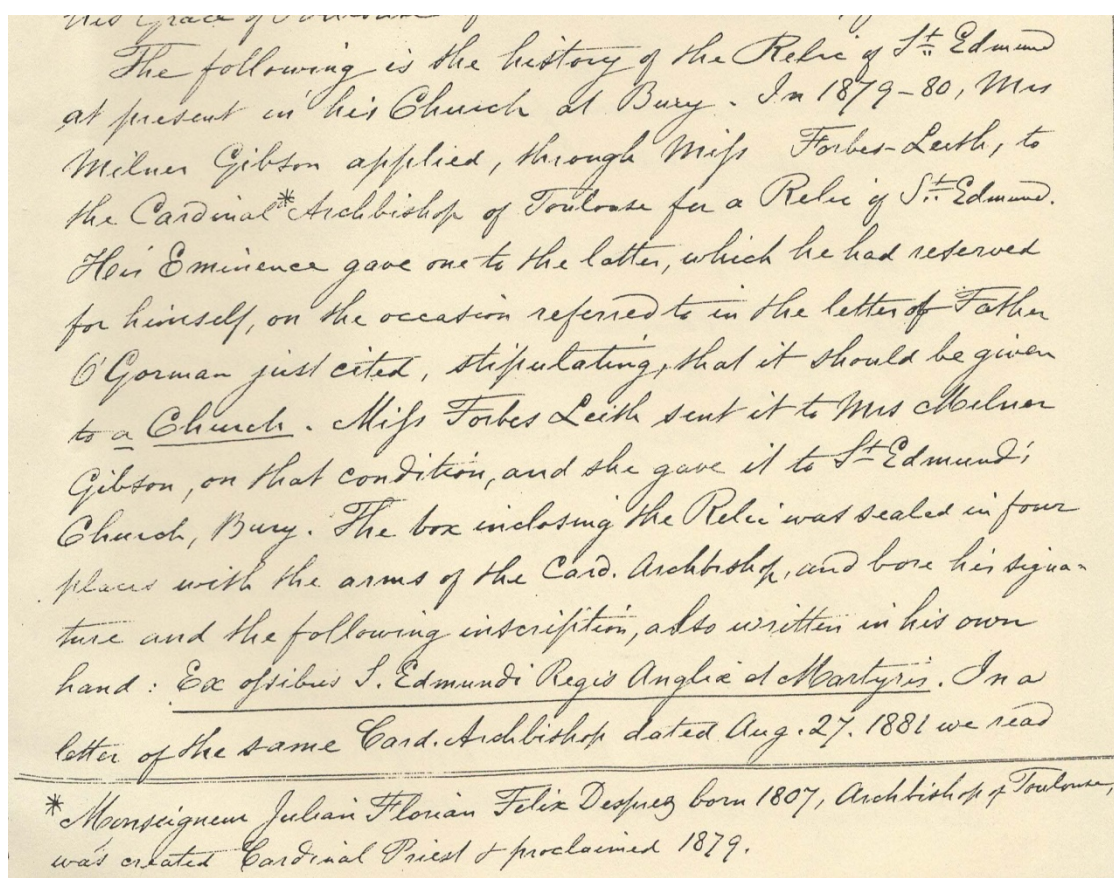
To conclude this Section we are left considering the authenticity of the claimed relics of St Edmund and the theories surrounding where his body was laid to rest. First, we may be puzzled by the body

of St Edmund being revered by pilgrims from across Europe at St Edmund's Abbey, Bury St Edmunds until the dissolution of the Abbey in 1539. If we are to believe the theory that the body of the Saint was taken to Toulouse in 1217 and enshrined there, then it is patently obvious that one or other legend is incorrect. Most disturbing is that between 1217 and 1539 the two shrines were being visited by pilgrims in the belief that his body was present. However, this was not an uncommon situation with the remains and relics of Saints – the reassembly of their mortal remains sometimes produced more body parts than could have existed!

Section 'B' highlighted the mystery surrounding the disposal of the monstrance that was used for the exposition of the relic of St Edmund. The history regarding the relic which was provided in 1881 is set down in various places within the Jesuits' Commemoranda:

'The Cardinal Archbishop of Toulouse gave it to Miss Forbes Leith for Mrs Milner Gibson in a box sealed by him. Bishop Arthur Riddell took the relic from this box and duly authenticated it on November 1881 so that it was in time to be exposed for St Edmund's feast November 20 of that year'.

The following extract from the Commemoranda reiterates these details:



Fr Lazenby's account is more comprehensive: '... and we learn that the body of St Edmund which according to Jocelyn de Brakelond has been preserved incorrupt from 870 date of his death. It was so discovered at the date of his removal to a new shrine in 1198 by Abbot Sampson. It was stolen from its shrine in 1217 by Prince Louis of France and given to St Sernin's Church, Toulouse. It remained there until 1644. A terrible plague devastated Toulouse from 1628 to 1631, the citizens vowed to place Edmund's remains in a silver shrine if he would obtain the cessation of the plague. At once it

ceased but the people could not fulfil their vow until 1644. Then however the whole Archdiocese engaged in the solemnities of the translation which lasted eight days, the relic this (parish Bury St Edmunds now possesses) was extracted from the shrine in Toulouse by Cardinal Archbishop Duprez in 1867 for himself and the Cardinal himself gave it for this church in Bury (see also page 99 this chronicle). The box containing the relic was sealed in four places with the Cardinal's arms. Also inscribed on the box in the Cardinal's writing were the words *Ex ossibus St Edmund Regis et Martyre Angliae*.

The Cardinal Archbishop of Toulouse in 1867 took the relic of St Edmund for himself, also for prior A O'Gorman OSB president of the English College of Douai and Fr O'Gorman enclosed a copy of the authentication of his relic for Fr Lazenby to look at. Fr A O'Gorman's letter is dated September 21, 1881. Our relic here in Bury is thus closely connected with the Douai one. Bishop Arthur Riddell himself took our relic out of its sealed box and authenticated it and set it in its presence silver reliquary (of silver and gold), it is set on a dark crimson groundwork surrounded by a crown of thorns. The relic is encircled by the Cardinal's inscription *Ex ossibus St Edmundi Regis et Martyris Angliae*.

The memoranda states, "It has a monstrance to display it. The whole is enclosed in a stand 25 inches high, surmounted by a small cross. It is richly chased in designs emblematical of martyrdom, and set with emeralds. The base is triangular and bears the medallions, "M", "X P" and "S J". While a monstrance is normally reserved for the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, the word monstrance is used explicitly as housing the relic.

It is also not known if this was the same relic referred to as having been (privately) carried by Fr Jones through the main street of the town on 9 March 1902 from which he was inclined to believe that no further reported cases of smallpox occurred in Bury St Edmunds (Section 'B' also refers).

In 1901 a request was made for some of the relics of St Edmund to be transferred from Toulouse via Rome to England with the intention of them being deposited in Westminster Cathedral which was then being built. An assortment of bones was provided but following lengthy media debate these were discredited because they were a mix of male and female bones and it was conceded that they could not have been those of the Saint. These bones remain at Arundel in the custody of the Duke of Norfolk. However, there is still a theory which may one day be tested: The Cathedral of St Sernin had relics of many Saints. At the time of the French Revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries it is contended that various relics were hurriedly removed for safe keeping which could well account for why bones comprise a mix.

The next epoch in the history of the relics of St Edmund occurred when Fr Houghton managed to obtain two teeth from the relics of St Edmund retained in Toulouse – these were installed at the St Edmund's Day Mass on 20 November 1969 (as described in Section 'C', Fr Houghton claimed that the relics comprised three teeth, an error he corrected in a letter in 1987). However, upon the sale of the altar in 2013 there was no trace of the relics although Fr Houghton had previously indicated that he had sent them to Douai, a fact confirmed by Abbot Geoffrey Scott in 2022.

The relic of St Edmund referred to in Section 'E' with its authentication of 2006 provided by Fr Hackeson remains in our Church and is exposed on the Saint's feast day.

The truth must be that no one knows the whereabouts of St Edmund. Excitement grew in Bury St Edmunds in 2020 that 1000 years since the founding of St Edmund's Abbey explorations would result in unearthing his body but such hopes were not realised. Whereas in Leicester it was possible to pinpoint the burial of King Richard III and use DNA to verify his remains, in respect of St Edmund the only potential way forward seems to rely on comparing any remains with the claimed relics.