

# THE CHAPEL OF ST EDMUND DE POUNTENAY IN IPSWICH

by MURIEL CLEGG

IN THE LITTLE Oxfordshire town of Abingdon, he is St Edmund of Abingdon, for that is where he was born. Elsewhere, he is sometimes known as St Edmund of Pontigny from his burial place, or more often as Edmund Rich, the saintly archbishop of Canterbury. In Ipswich, where he has been almost forgotten, he was once better known as St Edmund de Pountenay.

Born about the year 1175, Edmund Rich studied and taught at Oxford and at Paris. His ability, his eloquence and his austerities commended him to Gregory IX, at whose instance he became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1234. From that time onward his life is a long tale of conflict, with the pope, with the king and with his own monks. Worn out, he retired in 1240 to Pontigny, died that same year at Soissy, and was buried at Pontigny, '*apud Pontoniacum*' as Matthew Paris has it (Paris, under the year 1240). But his character and unquestionable saintliness had endeared him to his contemporaries. Eight years after his death he was canonized.<sup>1</sup>

During the years between his death and canonization an upsurge of popular admiration and devotion attached itself to his name. A number of dedications to the new saint in the years following his canonization would not be surprising. In fact when Frances Arnold Forster compiled her three-volumed *Studies in church dedications* in 1899 she hesitated to include St Edmund of Pontigny on the grounds that the only two dedications she had found were doubtful. One, at Sedgefield in Durham, was almost certainly intended for King Edmund; of the other, at Dover, she believed there remained no record and no memory (Forster, 1899, I, 362). In this she was greatly mistaken, for the Dover chapel survived and in recent years has been carefully restored.<sup>2</sup> Francis Bond (1914, 316) allowed St Edmund one unspecified dedication, though the saint was honoured at his birthplace and at Salisbury, where he had been treasurer. But the Ipswich dedication received no mention from either writer.

The omission is not altogether surprising. In Ipswich the name of the saint and the location of his chapel provided sources of confusion for local historians, particularly in the 19th century. Moreover the chapel itself had by that time completely disappeared and even the street name derived from it had gone.

To begin with the name attached to the Ipswich chapel: in the few early references, its chaplain is simply 'the chaplain of St Edmund' (*P.P.* 24/25 Edw. I, 1296) and the chapel itself is 'of St Edmund' or 'of St Edmund in Ipswich' (*G.P.* 30 Edw. I, 1302). Then, in January 1305, it is described as 'the chapel of St Edmund *de Pontiac*' (*P.P.* 32/35 Edw. I, 1305), a description which follows the latinized form of Pontigny used by Matthew Paris and which appears again later. Thus local records put beyond doubt the dedication to Edmund Rich. Beyond this is the authority of the bishop's register at Norwich which in 1299 described it as '*capelle Sancti Edmundi Archiepiscopi*'.<sup>3</sup>

The date of the chapel's foundation is not known but since the first recorded chaplain, Silvester de Belynges, appears in 1290,<sup>4</sup> that date may very well provide a clue. If it is to be accepted, then this is a comparatively late dedication, coming at a time when the first flush of enthusiasm for the new saint was already subsiding (*O.D.S.*, 1978, 122). Nevertheless, the comparatively small number of these dedications, together with an incident in the early years of the Ipswich chapel, arouse the feeling that there may have been some connection, as yet unknown, between St Edmund and the town of Ipswich. On 8 September in the year 1300, Richard Haltebe,<sup>5</sup> member of a fairly large family of no great distinction in Ipswich,

was crossing the sea 'towards St Edmund *de Pontoniac*' when he was attacked and robbed. A gang of four, John Pinsoun, Henry Heryng, Simon Groyn and William Oldhead, with others unknown, followed him to the gates of Calais where they set upon him (*P.P.* 29/30 Edw. 1). Richard Halteby was evidently on his way to the tomb of St Edmund at Pontigny, a popular place of pilgrimage for some years after the saint's canonization. But for his misadventure, Richard Halteby's pilgrimage would have gone unrecorded, which leaves one wondering how many similar journeys from Ipswich may have occurred.

The chapel, which was impropriated to the priory of St Peter and St Paul in Ipswich (Taylor, 1821, 96), stood, as will presently be shown, a little behind No. 15, Lower Brook Street, on the south side of Rosemary Lane and alongside its rectory, which occupied the corner site. Its churchyard extended eastwards to Foundation Street. John de Bergham, the second recorded chaplain, and a man of somewhat turbulent character, was engaged in disputes over property which he claimed as 'free in alms' in the time of his predecessor, Silvester de Belynges. It may have been one of these disputes that brought him to court in 1296, when he was accused of insulting Walter de Westhale, striking him and calling him liar and thief (*P.P.* 24/25 Edw. 1). In one case of disputed property in 1305, ownership of part of a house called 'Le Almesse House' was in question (*P.P.* 32/33 Edw. 1). Unfortunately no indication of the location of this interesting house is given, though it must have been in the neighbourhood of the chapel. It is tempting to link it with almshouses in Brook Street called Poltneye Houses where there was an outbreak of plague in 1584. There are later and decidedly confusing references to a lazar house of 'St' or 'Sir Thomas a Pountney', but no firm conclusions can be drawn from them.<sup>6</sup>

The name 'Poltney' brings us to the chief cause of later confusion over the chapel's dedication. Although variants of the latinized form *Pontoniac* were used as late as 10 July 1525 (*P. and G. Ct Bk*, 12/22 Hen. VIII), in September 1358 the version 'St Edmund de Pountenaye' was used (*Rec. Roll* 32/33 Edw. III). This is clearly an anglicized form of the name, subsequently appearing in such varied forms as 'Pountney' in an enrolled deed of 4 June 1604 (C5/16/47), 'Powtneye' on 13 December 1643 (C5/16/84) and even 'Punkeny' in 1730 (*E.A.N.Q.*, 1885-6, 183). In the second edition of the *Suffolk Traveller* (1764, 35-36) where the story of the chapel's dedication is correctly told, 'Pountney' is explained as 'corruptly so called for *Pontoniac* in France', but there is no attempt at translating the Latin form. Clarke (1830, 314) followed this story closely. But Wodderspoon (1850, 331) who, as he himself says, made considerable use of town records, failed to understand the derivation of the name. He assumed that the chapel was dedicated to 'St Edmund king of the East Angles', and produced an ingenious theory that it had been subsequently endowed by Sir John de Pountney or Polteneye, Lord Mayor of London in 1331, a merchant well acquainted with Suffolk, and, so he says, with Ipswich. Wodderspoon's story was revived in 1884 by W. H. Richardson (1884, 82 note c), whilst during the following year the story provoked a lively correspondence in the pages of *The East Anglian or Notes and Queries* (1885-6, 150, 168, 183, 203, 231). In the course of this correspondence the statements of the writers quoted above were discussed with varying degrees of approval and plain disbelief. It must be said that no evidence has yet been produced to support Wodderspoon's theory of a connection with the Lord Mayor of London.

It is Wodderspoon again who provided the next cause of confusion, this time over the location of the chapel. The site, he said, was unknown (Wodderspoon, 1850, 331) but since the chapel was consolidated with St Helen, it must have been near that church, and not 'at the south west corner of Rosemary Lane as conjectured by Kirby'. Here Wodderspoon is quoting, not Kirby, but the editor of the second edition of the *Suffolk Traveller* (1764, 35-36). The

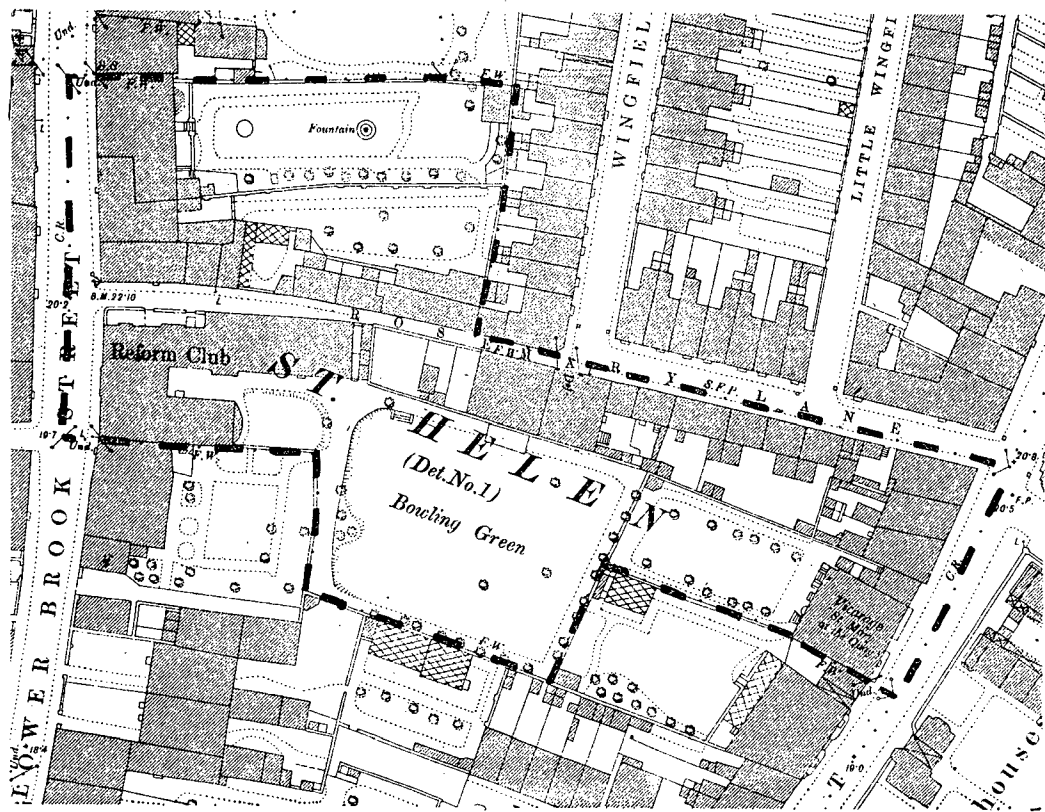


Fig. 25—Boundary of detached portion of St Helen's parish, superimposed on Ordnance Survey 1:1250 plan, 1884.

chapel was certainly consolidated with St Helen (Taylor, 1821, 116), possibly after the dissolution of the priory or more probably earlier, since the two shared the same incumbent in 1409 (Morley, 1936). Unfortunately early references to the chapel make no mention of the parish in which it was situated, but the evidence of the later deeds quoted below makes its position clear. Furthermore, the most valuable part of the *East Anglian Notes and Queries* correspondence describes part of a perambulation of St Helen's parish made on 5 May 1730 (*E.A.N.Q.*, 1885-6, 183).<sup>7</sup> This 'isolated' part of the parish is described as running from the house then (in 1885) occupied by Mr Stephens in Brook Street (which White's *Directory*, 1885, shows to be No. 11, Lower Brook Street) to Wingfield Street (the map (Fig. 25) shows it reaching the backs of Wingfield Street gardens). From Wingfield Street it ran south to Rosemary Lane, east to Foundation Street, south to (and here the 1730 perambulation is quoted) 'a gate belonging to Mr Skinner opposite to the door of the Upper Foundation', then 'go in at the same over the wall into Allan's Orchard, take in very near the whole of it, two tenements and a malt office newly built in Brook Street, sometimes called Stone Houses or Stone Yard, formerly a chapel of ease to St Helen's called St Edmund de Punkeny'. So there we have it. Ogilby's map (1674) shows 'Mr Gosnet's orchard' in place of Allan's; by Pennington's time (1778) the orchard had been encroached upon by buildings and gardens. Neither map marks or names the site of the chapel.

Looked at together, the 1730 perambulation and the map of St Helen's parish (Fig. 25)

give a clear indication of the area in which chapel and cemetery lay; what they do not tell us is the precise location of the chapel and its rectory. Neither can we tell how much of this area was occupied by the cemetery. The only known measurement is that given in an enrolled deed of 8 February 1588 (C5/16/31) which describes the chapel as 'in a piece of land containing, by estimation, one rod of land'. If we assume that the square measurement is intended, this gives an area of  $30\frac{1}{4}$  sq yds. But, as the deed implies, the active life of the chapel had by this time ceased<sup>8</sup> and the smallness of the area indicates that the cemetery had been severed from it.

As yet, nothing of significance can be said of the area north of Rosemary Lane. An enrolment of 29 July 1612 (C5/16/54) evidently relates to the site of No. 13 Lower Brook Street which is described as being 'near St Pountney's Chappell now called le Stonehouse' but it makes no mention of the cemetery. Enrolled deeds of 1358, 1525, 1643 and 1745 are more helpful in that they establish the positions of the chapel and rectory. In addition, though the cemetery is not named, I believe that the evidence of these deeds indicates a close correspondence between the area of St Helen's parish south of Rosemary Lane and that occupied by either the cemetery or the cemetery with other land attached to the chapel. As commonly happens, these deeds give the names of owners or occupiers of adjoining properties, with the cardinal points, but no measurements. Without measurements no accurate reconstructions can be made, but the diagrams (Fig. 26a-d) may serve to show the relative positions of the properties concerned, though they do not represent size and shape.

The deed of September 1358 (Fig. 26a) relates to a messuage and garden in the parish of St Mary Key 'between the cemetery of St Edmund de Pountenaye on the east, the highway on the west, the south head on the house (*tenement*) formerly (of) William son of William Malyn,<sup>9</sup> the north head on the house belonging to the said church of St Edmund'. The points of interest here are that the boundary between the two parishes is shown taking the same turn southwards as in both maps and perambulation, whilst the corner site is the property of St Edmund's chapel.

The next deed (Fig. 26b), 10 July 1525, describes a tenement lying 'between the close formerly of Roger Tymperley, gentleman, on the south part, and the rectory of the chapel of St Edmund *de Pontiniac* on the north, of which the west head abuts on the king's street called le Brookestreete and the east head abuts on the cemetery of the said chapel'. Separated by nearly two centuries, these two deeds present essentially the same picture, but with the rectory specifically mentioned in the second.

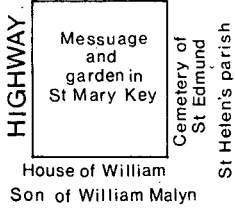
A clearer picture emerges from an enrolment of 13 December 1643 (Fig. 26c), when the Stone House is shown occupying the site of the former rectory with the chapel adjoining it. The deed relates to:

'A messuage in occupation of James Peacocke and W. Sayer also all the Chapel dissolved now or late dissolved called or known by the name of the chappell of Edmund Powtneye in Ipswich, and all appurtenances in the parishes of St Helen and St Mary Key, Ipswich, between the messuage in occupation of Ralph Holland, tallow chandler and the orchard late in the occupation of Sam Ward, Bachelor of Divinity, dec., on south, house called Stone House in part and a little lane leading from the Grammar School towards Brook Street in part on north, one heade thereof abuts upon the street there leading from a lane called Rocke's Lane towards the parish church of St Mary at the Key in Ipswich aforesaid, towards the East and the other head thereof abuts upon the street called the Brooke Street in part and upon a house called or known by the name of the Stone House in part and upon the yard, orchard or garden now or late in occupation of Ralph Holland tallow chandler in part towards the West'.

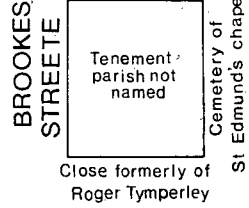
(a) Sept. 1358,  
Rec. Roll 25/33 Edw. iii.

(b) 10 July 1525.  
P. and G. Ct. Bk, 12/22 Hen. viii.

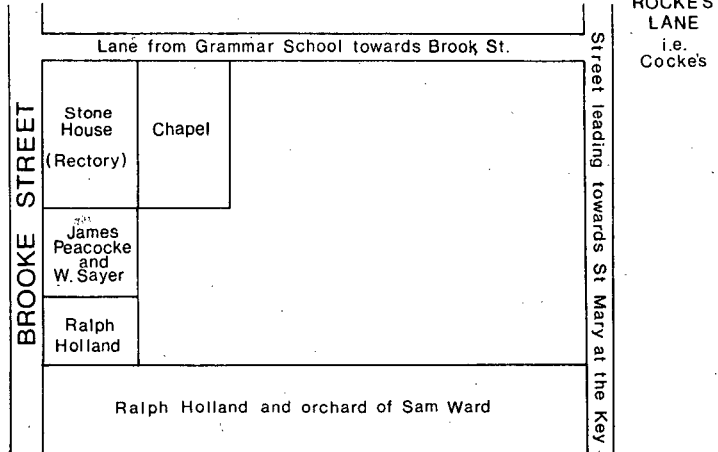
(St. Helens parish)  
House pertaining to St Edmund



Rectory of St Edmund



(c) 1643 C5/16/84.



(d) 1745 C5/16/178.

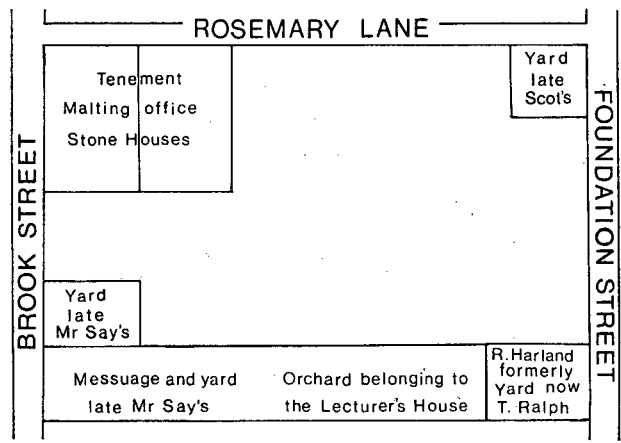


FIG. 26—Diagrams of properties and their abuttals as described in deeds: a, 1358; b, 1525; c, 1643; d, 1745.

This deed is full of interest. The message to the south of the Stone House again reveals the dividing line between the two parishes; the 'little lane' is of course Rosemary Lane, whilst 'Rocke's Lane' should surely be Cocke's<sup>10</sup> or Cox Lane, which with Foundation Street had from early times formed a continuous way from Carr Street to the quay. The orchard of the deceased Samuel Ward, best known of all the town lecturers, belongs to Nos. 19-21 Lower Brook Street, once the town lecturer's house.

Shorn of its more cumbersome details, the deed of 1 June 1745 (Fig. 26d) describes 'a tenement and malting office lately rebuilt and fitted up and repaired by William Allen, several old houses or tenements commonly called or known by the names of the Stone Houses . . . also the great orchard or garden . . . situate in or near the Brook Street which messuages do abutt as followeth (upon a messuage and yard) and in part upon the yard or orchard belonging to the Lecturer's House in the occupation of Rev. Hingeston Clerk<sup>11</sup> and in part (upon another house) towards the south and upon (various yards) and upon the common street called the foundation street towards the east, upon a yard and Rosemary Lane to the north, upon (a yard) in part and in part upon Brook Street towards the West'.

Once again, this time after the interval of a century, the outline remains very much the same. There are more yards, and the grammar school master now occupies the town lecturer's house, but more to our purpose, a malting office and a tenement now occupy the site of the chapel, whilst the former rectory has been divided into several holdings. If we look at the separate references to the Stone House or Houses in these deeds we see a confusion between the sites of chapel and rectory not surprising in two adjacent buildings whose original functions had been half forgotten. The transformation suffered by the chapel shows that it had shared the fate of other once notable buildings in the town. The change was short lived. In 1735 (Kirby, 1735, 8) the chapel had been described as 'lately almost entire'. By 1764 it would seem that no trace remained (*Suff. Trav.*, 1764, 35-36). Possibly by that date the stone houses and the malt house had given way to the 18th-century building in red brick whose façade was preserved when re-development of the site took place in 1975.

Further evidence of the extent of the cemetery is provided by the archaeological exploration of the site prior to the re-development. Unfortunately a complete examination of the whole area was not possible. The area where evidence of sepulture was noted during the course of the development work is shown in Fig. 27. The site of the chapel and rectory must have suffered considerable disturbance from the erection of the mid-18th-century building. Thus it is hardly surprising that the close watch on the area whilst re-development was in progress revealed no trace of earlier stone buildings. What is surprising is to find so little space between the western limits of the burial area and Lower Brook Street. Bearing in mind the east-west orientation of a chapel, more space is needed than at first sight appears to exist. The most probable explanation is that the westernmost burials had actually been sited within the chapel. The plan also reveals that the full area of the cemetery had not been occupied by burials.

Finally, the loss of the buildings almost coincided with the loss of the street name associated with them. Ogilby's map, as we have seen, does not mark the site, but names what is now Foundation Street as St Edmund Pootny Lane. Brook Street might perhaps more aptly have been named from the saint, but that street had a visual reminder of its old established name in the brook running down its entire length. Foundation Street, despite its undoubted antiquity, appears in medieval records simply as 'the lane from the quay to the Friars Preachers'. This does not necessarily mean that it lacked a name, it is simply that we do not hear of it until it was recorded by Ogilby. A version of the name appears again in 1733 (C5/16/166) when it was on the point of change, for it was then referred to as 'the street

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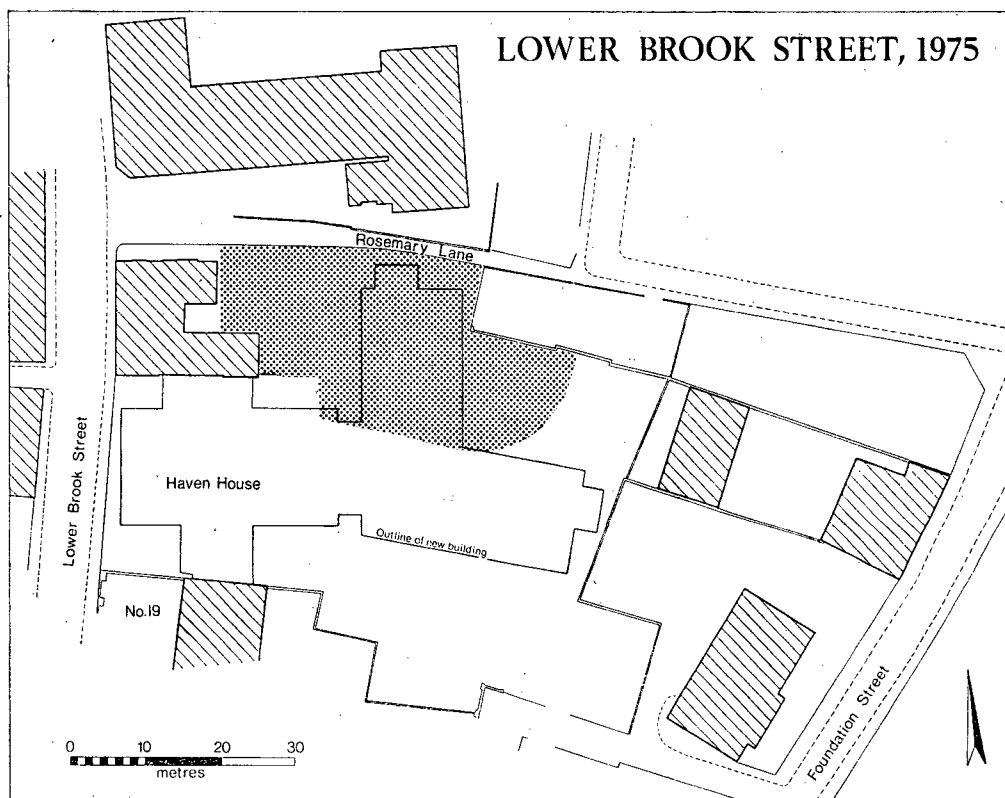


FIG. 27—The extent of the medieval cemetery as revealed by archaeological excavation and observation in 1975.

called St Edmunds' Poultney *alias* Christ Hospital Street'. By 1745 it had become Foundation Street. Tooley's foundation had at length obliterated earlier memories.

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NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> According to *D.N.B.*, 1975, 606, he was canonized in 1248. *O.D.S.*, 1978, 122, has 1246, which seems a very short interval after his death.
- <sup>2</sup> There is no doubt about this dedication. Although the reports on the progress of the chapel's restoration between 1966 and 1968 (*Arch. Cant.*, 1966, LXXXI, xlv; 1967, LXXXII, xlv and 1968, LXXXIII, xlix) speak only of 'the tiny medieval chapel of St Edmund', Christopher Buckingham (1968, 20-23) tells the story of the dedication to St Edmund, Archbishop of Canterbury, by St Edmund's great friend, Richard, bishop of Chichester, shortly before Richard's death in 1253.

- <sup>3</sup> I owe this reference to Mr Keith Wade.
- <sup>4</sup> Silvester de Belynges is the first chaplain of St Edmund's to be found in Morley, 1936. The list of chaplains below is taken from that source, with additions from Wodderspoon (1850, 390-1), marked *W*
- 1290 Belynges, Silvester de
  - 1295 Bergham, John de
  - 1322 Grangia, John de (de Playford *W*)
  - 1322 Playford, John de (evidently the John de Grangia de Playford above)
  - 1345 Clare, Richard de
  - 1353 Lawrence, Nicholas
  - 1361 May de Mutton, John
  - 1367 Thomas Bird de Claxton *W*
  - 1367 Femmot de Intwood, John
  - 1369 Blackenham, John de
  - 1399 Colesmore, William de
  - 1409 Tanner, William (and St Helen)
- c.* 1420 Lopham, John
- 1424 Walden, John
- <sup>5</sup> Martin, 1973, has a number of references to the family, mainly concerned with property transactions. Richard Halteby's name appears frequently in minor cases in the plea rolls. He does not seem to have held office in the town.
- <sup>6</sup> An account of the plague outbreak and measures taken to deal with it is given in Webb, 1966, 114-5. A legacy from William Smart to the lazar house of 'Sir Thomas a Pountney' is mentioned in Canning, 1747, 47-48, and Canning, 1819, 38, 48-49, where the name is given first as 'Sir' then 'St' Thomas, and the location is as uncertain as the name. But despite a perplexing reference to the house or houses being 'near the London Road', there is at least a possibility that all these references, from 1305 onwards, are to the same houses.
- <sup>7</sup> The document from which this account of the perambulation is taken must originally have belonged to the records of St Helen's parish, but it cannot now be found.
- <sup>8</sup> '... which chapel now or formerly is called or known by the name chapel of St Edmund of Pountenay'.
- <sup>9</sup> William Malyn, senior, was a bailiff, 1322-23 (Martin, 1973, 104-6). The Malyn family owned various taverns in Ipswich, and is best known for its Chaucer connections.
- <sup>10</sup> It is possible to trace from the court rolls the continuous history of Cox Lane from its early description as 'the Lane from Carr Street to the friars preachers' to variants of Balman's Lane and finally, early in the 17th century, Cocke's, or Cox Lane. 'Rocke's' Lane has not been found elsewhere and is an obvious error.
- <sup>11</sup> The Rev. Robert Hingeston, M.A. was headmaster of the Grammar School, 1743-66. Edward Leedes, jun., who became headmaster in 1712, was given the Town's Lecturer's House which thus became the Headmaster's House until 1851. (Gray and Potter, 1950, 69, 162.)

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All MSS references are to the Ipswich branch of the Suffolk Record Office. A few early court rolls, not yet individually numbered, have been given their descriptive title, in accordance with the following key. Later documents have been given their allotted reference numbers.

<i>G.P.</i>	Court of great pleas
<i>P.P.</i>	Court of petty pleas
<i>P. and G. Ct Bk</i>	Petty and Great Court book
<i>Rec. Roll</i>	Recognizance roll