

# THE CONTRIBUTION OF HOXNE TO THE CULT OF ST EDMUND KING AND MARTYR IN THE MIDDLE AGES AND LATER

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'HERE [IN THE COUNTY OF SUFFOLK] in a bye-place and out of the common remark, lies the ancient town of Hoxon, famous for being the place where Saint Edmund was martyred, in honour of whom the famous monastery of St Edmund's Bury was founded, which most people erroneously think was the place where the said murder was committed.' Thus wrote Daniel Defoe in 1724. He is confirming the belief in Hoxne as the site of the martyrdom that he had expressed when describing Bury: 'his martyrdom was at Hoxon or Henilsdon near Harleston on the Waveney in the farthest verge of the county' (Defoe 1724, 80).

That Defoe's insistence on Hoxne's claim to be the place of St Edmund's death was needed in the early 18th century reflects the continued uncertainty about the site of the martyrdom, and he also reveals the confusion felt about the place-names connected with it: Haegilisdun (Defoe's Henilsdon) and Hoxne.

The earliest account of the event, the *Passio di Sancti Edmundi* of Abbo Floriensis (c.980),<sup>1</sup> gives 'Haegilisdun' as the name of the 'vill' where the saint met his death at the hands of the Danes in 869; and this name continued to be quoted in many subsequent 'Lives' of the saint. Yet, from at least c.1200, and possibly earlier, Hoxne was claimed to be the relevant place, and a cult celebrating this was established there that lasted for several centuries. The discrepancy in the place-names did not escape notice, but was explained in the Middle Ages by a change in name: e.g. '*Eglesdune alio nomine Hoxne*' (Horstman 1901, 503).

Yet another name was added in the Middle Ages by Archdeacon Hermann of Bury Abbey. As an official of the Abbey and a literary man, he cannot have been ignorant of Abbo's *Passio*, but in his account of the Saint's death, in his *Liber de miraculis Sancti Edmundi* (1095) he states '*ut majorum nobis intimarunt relata*' the saint was buried '*in villula Suthtuna dicta de prope loco martyrizationis*'. He does not, however, indicate which of the many Suttons in Suffolk is referred to. It is just possible that, relying on oral tradition, he may have confused the place of martyrdom of St Edmund with that of St Ethelbert, also by a coincidence at a place called 'Sutton'.

Modern historians have brought the science of etymology to bear upon this place-name problem. Taking 'Haegilisdun' as the touchstone, they have rejected the claim of Hoxne since it is etymologically impossible for 'Hoxne' to derive from 'Haegilisdun'. Professor Dorothy Whitelock gave the decisive verdict: "'Haegilisdun" is the correct form for Hellesden, Norfolk, and for no other surviving name' (Whitelock 1969, 220). Accordingly, recent accounts of the saint's death have located it there. However, a more up-to-date discovery of the field-name 'Hellesden Ley' on a map of Bradfield near Bury has suggested that the relevant site is in that area, though this requires, and is receiving, further investigation (West 1983, 223).

The claim of 'Sutton' has not so far received much attention, but the late Lilian Redstone expressed the opinion that it might have been 'Suddon', the mediaeval name of a hamlet in Hoxne parish, now South Green (Redstone 1932). There is also an ancient moated site called Sutton Hall near Bradfield which may help to support the claim of that place (West 1983, 225).

Strong though the etymological argument may be – and it is in fact incontrovertible –

surely some weight should be given to historical tradition, and no evidence has so far been brought forward to show that there was ever any veneration of St Edmund at either Hellesdon or Bradfield, whereas at Hoxne, as already stated, there was a cult of the saint. It was based specifically on the belief that he was martyred and buried there, and it was served by not one, but two chapels, dedicated to the saint. It is the purpose of this article to investigate this cult, its origin and its history.

The two chapels were not co-eval. One of them was an early foundation, since by *c.*1100 it was already antiquated or in ruins.<sup>2</sup> It may have originated in the Anglo-Saxon period, when Hoxne was a place of ecclesiastical and possibly episcopal importance. Hoxne Hundred was called 'Bishop's Hundred' and may therefore have been of ancient origin, going back to the foundation of the hundred system in East Anglia in Saxon times; it probably contained territory over which there were episcopal rights (Dodwell 1963, 185 seq.). Moreover, there are two references to Hoxne in early documents showing some connection with the episcopate, if only as an administrative centre. The first is in the will of Bishop Theodred of London, *c.*950 (Whitelock 1930, 1). It was to Hoxne that he came on his mission to re-organise the diocese of East Anglia after the disruption of the Danish invasions, and there he established what he called his 'bishopric'.<sup>3</sup> From his will it is possible to form an idea of the importance of Hoxne in the survival or restoration of the local Church at this critical period. He mentioned a community of priests there who were serving a minster, or mother-church serving a wide area, dedicated to St Ethelbert, the royal saint and martyr who was beheaded by Offa, the pagan King of Mercia, at Sutton Wells in Herefordshire in 794. The Bishop left a legacy to them, and to another similar group of priests in charge of the shrine of St Edmund at Bury. He was probably the bishop of that name who, according to Abbo, inspected and authenticated the body of the saint (Scarfe 1969, 306).

The minster at Hoxne was still in existence in 1035 × 1038, when Bishop Aelfric of Elmham bequeathed money and fenland to 'the priests at Hoxne' (Whitelock 1930, 7).

The second mention of Hoxne in connection with the episcopate is an entry in Domesday Book, where a church there is described as having been '*sedes episcopatus de Suffolk*' in the time of Edward the Confessor (*D.B.*, f.13). After the Norman Conquest, the status of Hoxne became that of a country estate to which the Bishops of Norwich retired for recreation or recuperation. The demesne, according to Domesday, comprised, besides land, 2 mills, fisheries, woods, many beasts and tenants, and a market, though the profits from this had been eroded by the competition of the market owned by Robert Malet at Eye (*D.B.*, f.379).

In addition to this demesne, they owned two deer-parks, the Old and the New. The site of the Old Park is shown on Joseph Hodkinson's map of Suffolk, 1783. It is commemorated today by the name of Park Farm, near Denham. The 'Newe Park' was already in use by the 14th century and contained the Bishop's 'palace' or manor-house.<sup>4</sup> It was situated in the main part of the village near the market-place, and was bounded on its other sides by the rivers Dove and Goldbrook and the road from Hoxne to Eye. An estate map drawn in 1619<sup>5</sup> shows the lay-out and building as they survived after the Dissolution of the monasteries. The house seems to have been modernised but the imposing gate-house might have survived from episcopal times.

The church is also shown on this map, to the north-east of the park. Outside the range of the map, separate from the church and situated at a distance from it towards the south, there was a chapel dedicated to St Edmund – the earlier of the two chapels mentioned, destined in time to become of importance in the cult of the saint.

The earliest documentary evidence for the existence of this chapel is to be found (if it can be accepted as authentic) in Bishop Herbert de Losinga's foundation charter for his cathedral and monastery in Norwich. It is dated 1101, but is now known only in copies of c.1200. In this charter the Bishop appropriated to his new foundation '*ecclesiam de Hoxene cum capella Sancti Edmundi*'. Furthermore, one copy of the charter supplies the earliest documentary evidence of the claim that Hoxne was the place of St Edmund's martyrdom, '*eiusdem villa ubi idem martir interfectus est*' (Saunders 1939, f.4d.37).

This claim, however, had probably been made before 1101. This was at the time of the bitter struggle between the Bishops of Thetford/Norwich and the Abbot of Bury, towards the end of the 11th century. In accordance with the policy of Lanfranc, the Norman Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of East Anglia was required to remove his *cathedra* from Elmham to a more important and populous centre. The first choice of successive bishops was Bury. Naturally, this was vigorously resisted by Baldwin, the Abbot of Bury. It appears that among Bishop Herbert's arguments in his favour was the contention that the shrine of St Edmund was at one time attached to the East Anglian See, and should be restored to it; and it has been suggested that the Bishop's propaganda included the assertion that St Edmund was martyred at Hoxne, in the Bishop's territory (Gransden 1981, 70). This long-drawn-out dispute was settled officially by the King himself in a royal court in 1091. If the above theory is correct, it brings forward the date at which the claim for Hoxne was made.

By the early 13th century, the chronicler Roger of Wendover of St Albans Abbey mentions 'Hoxa' as the saint's burial-place, and therefore the place of his martyrdom, since Abbo relates that he was buried near where he was killed (Whitelock 1969, 229). By the 14th century the attribution to Hoxne was accepted even in Bury itself (Gransden 1985, 9); and it was from Bury that the impetus came that was in time to establish at Hoxne a modest centre of veneration of the saint, complementary to that at Bury.

Whether it was the special reputation of Hoxne as the place of the martyrdom that drew the attention of the Dapifer of Bury and his wife to the chapel there dedicated to St Edmund cannot be known, but as early as the beginning of the 12th century they were negotiating with the Bishop of Norwich to acquire the building in order to restore and enlarge it. Two transactions preserved in the register of Norwich Cathedral Priory provide evidence for this (Dodwell 1965-66, 160-61).

The first of these charters confirms an agreement already made by which Herbert de Losinga, Bishop of Norwich, gave to Ralph the Dapifer of Bury St Edmunds and his wife Edith, the church (*ecclesia*) of St Edmund of Hoxne and the land of one villein and two acres near the church for the duration of the life of the survivor. If there were no heirs of their bodies the church was to become the property of Norwich Cathedral Priory. It is undated, but assigned to 1110-19.

This charter marked a solemn occasion. It took place '*in capitulo*', in the chapter-house of the Bishop of Norwich, in the presence of his Archdeacon, the Prior, the monks of the Priory and the Bishop's Knights, and was attested by twenty-one witnesses (including the Prior), nine from the Bishop's side and eleven from Ralph's.

There are several points of particular interest in this document. In the first place, it proves the existence of a building dedicated to St Edmund at Hoxne at that date. Secondly, it is noteworthy that the inclusion of Edith's name in the charter shows that she was the holder of the property jointly with her husband, and that it would pass to whoever was the survivor. Thirdly, the grant of extra land suggests the purpose that Ralph and Edith had in mind in acquiring the chapel - to rebuild and probably enlarge it - and that this was in fact accomplished becomes clear in a second charter.

Ralph and Edith were persons of distinction – Ralph was the first known Dapifer, or Steward, of Bury St Edmunds, and had been appointed by 1087 at the latest, probably ten years earlier. The office seems to have been hereditary, and as secular governor of the town he was a powerful and wealthy man. His wife was an heiress. The wording of the charter shows that she already held land of the Bishop of Norwich. She had also inherited land from her first husband, and from two brothers, Theodoric and Walter the Deacon. The latter had been granted land in Bacton by Edith, widow of Edward the Confessor. He has been identified with the Walter who had been a royal almoner. He appears in a writ of William II and of Abbot Baldwin, and was probably dead by 1114–19. Edith may have been his daughter or his niece. She belonged to a pious family. It appears from the muniments of Wix Priory in Essex, that the Benedictine convent for nuns there was founded by Edith and her two brothers, Walter and Alexander Mascherell. This Mascherell family was one of several of that name in Essex, and seems to have been connected chiefly with Wix and Little Easton (Dodwell 1960, 149, and information to the writer).

Bishop Herbert de Losinga was possibly content that Ralph and Edith should devote themselves to the renovation of St Edmund's chapel at Hoxne at a time when his own energies and resources were needed for his new foundation at Norwich. The charter shows, however, that in fact he had only alienated the chapel for the duration of the lives of Ralph and Edith and the heirs of their bodies. They were apparently childless, and in the event the Bishop's stipulation ensured that the chapel returned into the possession of Norwich Cathedral Priory, as he had provided in his foundation charter.

The second charter relating to Norwich Cathedral Priory in the Bacton series is the instrument that ratified this arrangement (Dodwell 1960, 161). It is dated 1130. Ralph and Herbert de Losinga were by this time dead, so the charter is drawn between Ralph's successor, Maurice of Windsor and his wife, Egidia, and Bishop Eborard and the monks of Norwich Cathedral Priory. This charter went beyond the simple transfer of ownership. The chapel and land became the property of the Priory; but Maurice and Egidia retained some sort of controlling interest in it to the extent that they were able to impose certain conditions. The monks of Norwich were to found a monastery at the chapel to pray for the soul of Ralph, who had rebuilt the chapel from its foundations (*a primis fundaminibus*), and the souls of his heirs and ancestors for ever; and Maurice and Egidia, should they so wish, were to have the right to end their days in retirement in this monastery, or that at Norwich.

Again the inclusion of the wife's name in the charter shows that she was an important participant. The name Egidia is the Latin form of Edith, so she may have been Ralph's widow, which would explain the apparent disappearance of Edith's life-interest in the chapel, and would account for the ability to impose conditions.

This charter, recorded also in the First Register of Norwich Cathedral Priory (Saunders 1939, 69); is looked upon as the foundation charter of Hoxne Priory as a cell to Norwich Cathedral Priory. With its foundation, a centre was created from which the cult of St Edmund could be organised.

The appropriation of St Edmund's chapel to Norwich Cathedral Priory received episcopal, papal and royal confirmation (Dodwell 1965–66, nos. 13, 35, 278). But the building of the monastery seems to have proceeded slowly. This may have been due to construction technique at that period. Cautley has pointed out that the mortar used then dried slowly, and work was probably suspended during winter. Documentary evidence of its progress does not exist – the records of the Cathedral Priory were largely destroyed, partly by the fire of 1272 and partly by neglect after the Dissolution. From episcopal records, we know that in 1205 Bishop de Gray gave some tithes at Homersfield 'to the church of St Edmund of Hoxne and the monks serving God there' (Dodwell 1965–66, no.

169). According to Blomefield (1805, 607), echoing Dugdale, it was early in the 13th century that the monks were able to take up residence in the monastic cell. 'Thomas of Blumville, Bishop of Norwich who was consecrated in 1226, confirmed all revenues and privileges to God and the chapel of St Edmund at Hoxne and the monks serving God there, who were removed from the Bishop's palace where they were first placed, and fixed in their cell or monastery now built by the chapel which they daily served.' There are no documents extant to support this account, but Dugdale and Blomefield may have had access to records that no longer exist. It is known that Blomefield was able to make use of the collection of Thomas Martin of Palgrave.<sup>6</sup> The cell reached completion in 1267, when Bishop Roger de Skerning consecrated a burial-ground there, and granted forty days' pardon to all who contributed to the building or sustaining of the chapel (Dodwell 1965-66, 13).

Some idea of the lay-out of the cell when at last completed can be obtained from its surviving account rolls. About eighty of these are in existence, some in duplicate, now deposited partly in the Norfolk Record Office and partly at Windsor in the Library of the Dean and Chapter. Unfortunately they are all late, the earliest dated 1327-28. There are five more from the 14th century, but the majority belong to the 15th, and a few to the beginning of the 16th.

In addition to the chapel, the buildings consisted of a hall and parlour, with a parclose in the chamber of the hall, and the comfort of a painted curtain in the hall; a dormitory and chamber over the dormitory. The windows of hall and parlour were glazed, and there is an item in 1454 for the making of a clock. There were the usual offices of kitchen, bakery, dairy and brewery. Beyond the buildings lay an orchard and a garden - 10 yards of paling were bought for the 'south part of the garden near the road'; stables; closes for threshing and winnowing corn, a malt-house and a dove-cote; and a cemetery enclosed by a wall. Water was probably piped from the nearby Chickering Beck, as there was a cistern as well as fish-ponds and St Edmund's well, which had to be cleaned out.

As a priory it was a small foundation - a Warden or Prior, and six or seven monks sent out from Norwich Cathedral Priory. The standard account of it is by Blomefield (1805, 615 seq), but additional information can be found in other sources. The Wardens were usually chosen from the lesser obedientiaries of the mother-house, probably to gain administrative experience, since they were often promoted on their return (Saunders 1930, 75). From their names it appears they were local (i.e. East Anglian) men. In Hoxne the area belonging to the cell was to the south of, and distinct from, the demesne of the Bishop of Norwich and the land of the parsonage and church. Its extent can be traced from the account-rolls and the rent-rolls added to them. The monks owned, moreover, a messuage with buildings and two acres on the market-place bequeathed to them by Elias the chaplain of Hoxne,<sup>7</sup> which would have enabled them to supervise the fairs that were part of their revenue. Outside Hoxne they owned the manor of Yaxley, the church at Denham, and a well-endowed chapel at Rockell Manor at Ringshall near Needham Market, where the site has long been known as Chapel Farm.<sup>8</sup>

Their income came from offerings from pilgrims, processions and fairs, legacies and gifts from the pious, tithes chiefly from Homersfield and Syleham, offerings and dues from Denham Church and Ringshall Chapel, fees for granting probate to the people of Yaxley, and rents from their holdings in Hoxne. It appears from the account-rolls that they were expected to be self-supporting, but from time to time had to be 'forgiven' a deficit. They were required to contribute certain dues to the mother-house, such as a payment towards the expenses of the brethren at Oxford University. According to Blomefield the monks educated two boys at their own expense and kept a school. They would have required acolytes, and probably trained these boys for this office. The Prior of Norwich Cathedral

Priory visited the cell annually, and in the year 1274 a chapel dedicated to St Edmund and a 'great chamber' for the Prior of Hoxne were built above the west end of the cloister of Norwich Cathedral (Saunders 1930, 81, 128).

It is not known at what point the service of St Edmund's chapel and its attached monastery was enlarged to include a cult of St Edmund's martyrdom. It entailed the building of a second chapel, and two chapels were in operation by the date of the first extant account-roll (1326) and had been described in a poem by Robert Mannyng of Brunne c.1313. Two chapels were needed owing to the dual aspect of the saint's martyrdom, as related by Abbo: his actual execution occurred in one place, while the miraculous finding of his severed head, hidden by the Danes in a forest some distance away, was in another. Thus there were two places to be the object of veneration and pilgrimage. Two chapels were accordingly brought into use, one the original chapel of St Edmund in the Priory, the other a new building.

Documentary evidence for the existence of the two chapels is found in the Hoxne Priory account-rolls' list of receipts, where the first item listed is the money collected 'from the chapels', or, as in that of 1429, 'both chapels'. With one exception, the rolls do not distinguish between the two chapels; but that of 1351 gives some valuable information. It is unfortunately rather worn, but the following can be made out:-

... oblacions magna capell' vii£ vis. ?d.  
 ... capell' apud le Newe Worke xis.

The names by which the two chapels were differentiated were probably necessary because both were dedicated to the saint. It seems clear from the disparity in the amounts received that the Great Chapel was the more important and frequented and can safely be identified with the monastic chapel. The 'Newe Worke' speaks for itself, and was anglicised to 'Newark'.

The existence of the two chapels was known further afield than East Anglia, as will have been perceived by the reference to the poem by Robert Mannyng of Brunne. They are described in his continuation (in English) of Langtoft's *Vie de Saint Edmond*. Mannyng was no romantic court poet. He had entered Sempringham Priory in 1285. His aim was didactic – he states that he was writing in English in order to reach the uneducated reader, i.e. one who could not read Latin or French. He mentions the two chapels with enough definition to suggest that he had visited them and walked the 'great mile':

Ther thei fonde the hede is now a fair chapelle  
 Oxen hate the town ther the body felle.  
 Ther wher he was schotte another chapelle standes  
 And somewhat of that tree thei bonde until his handes,  
 The tone from tother moton a grete mile. (Hearne 1725).

Where in Hoxne were the two chapels situated? The will of Alys Wellys, 1506 (N.R.O., 440 Ryxe), gives a clue to this. She leaves money to be spent on tapers to be burnt 'before the image of St Edmund in the chapel at Cross Street and before the image of St Edmund in the chapel in the wood'. The site of Hoxne Priory has long been identified with Abbey Farm in Cross Street. This is authenticated by the Priory's history at the Dissolution of the monasteries, where it is recorded that it was sold, pulled down, and a dwelling-house built in its place, part of which is thought to survive in the present farmhouse (Copinger 1909, 53). The Great Chapel of the Priory therefore was at Cross Street.

The whereabouts of Newark Chapel are now forgotten and only a notional site can be suggested. Alys Wellys's 'in the wood' is too vague to be of help; but Robert Mannyng's

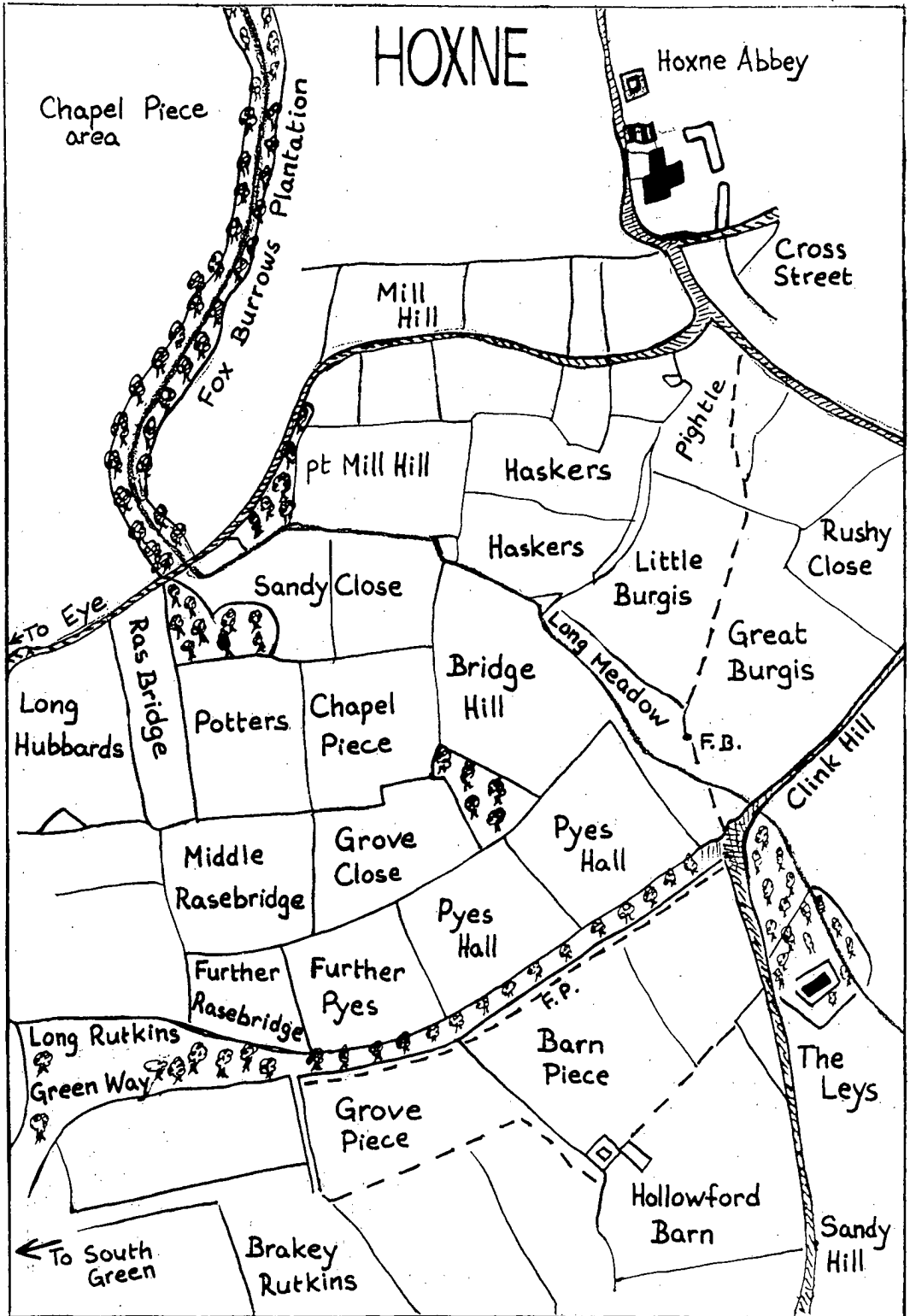


FIG. 36 - Hoxne from the 1842 tithe map (adapted and drawn by Mrs N. Coleman).

statement that the two chapels stood within one mile of one another limits the investigation to within a radius of one mile from Abbey Farm at Cross Street. The chapel is not named on any available map, so we have to depend upon certain documents in which it is mentioned in association with field-names that can be traced in later maps or records.

The earliest document to associate the chapel with a recognisable area is the Hoxne Priory account-roll for 1502. On the dorse has been added a rent-roll in which there is an item 'for rent [to the Bishop of Norwich] for 13 acres of demesne lying in one piece at Mill Hill (*monte molendum*) near the chapel of Newark'. The proximity of Newark to Mill Hill is further mentioned in the will of Sir Robert Southwell in 1559 (P.R.O., PROB 11/43) who bequeathed to his executors 'three pastures called Mill Hill, Askers and Newerke, late parcels of the dissolved Priory'. Mill Hill and Great and Little Haskers are marked on the Hoxne Hall estate map of 1757,<sup>9</sup> and can be identified today with fields on the eastern side of Nuttery Vale, just below the summit of the hill, still bearing similar names<sup>10</sup> and near the site of the mill, now marked by a ring of bushes.<sup>11</sup> Newark has disappeared from this map, but to the south of Mill Hill is a field called Chapel Piece.

There is a further mention of Newark Chapel in two 17th-century documents. In an extent of Hoxne Hall Manor begun in the reign of James I and transcribed in that of Charles II, a certain plot of land is described as lying '*ad lateram orientalis de Newark Chapelle*'.<sup>12</sup> The chapel is also recorded in a list of Hoxne tenements and streets (a sort of early directory) of the same century. Unfortunately, there is no detail in either document to identify the site of the chapel, but they are evidence of its continued existence.

Further light on the subject can be obtained from a terrier of lands belonging to Abbey Farm ascribed to 1725.<sup>13</sup> It names land and messuages called 'Great and Little New Worke lying between the lands of John Woode and the King's Highway leading from Heckfield Green to Denham Leys (now called Clink Hill) in part on the east . . . and the land of the Lord called New Worke Chapell on the west, one head abutting upon Rasebridgefield towards the south and upon the way leading from Cross Street to Heckfield Green towards the north'. The chapel, and perhaps some land that once belonged to the chapel, marked the western boundary of a rectangle, the other sides being Cross Street, Clink Hill and 'Rasebridgefield'. (Chapel Piece is to be found in this area.)

'Rasebridge' (various spellings) and 'Rasebridgefield' are mentioned repeatedly in the Hoxne Priory rent rolls in conjunction with the names of Newark and Newarkfield as though they were associated pieces of land. For example, in the 1484 roll: 'Hugo Floode for 1 acre of land beside Newark our close beyond Rasebrygge'. In an earlier roll, Floode's close is described as 'west of Newark'. The 1757 estate map confirms that 'Rays Bridge Pieces' do form the southern boundary of the rectangle described above. They extend eastwards from the point where Nuttery Vale (at one time Holway) crosses the bridge over the Goldbrook (not clearly drawn on the map) till they reach Clink Hill. To the west they partly form the southern boundary of Chapel Piece.

It is suggested therefore that Newark Chapel stood somewhere in the region of Chapel Piece and Rays Bridge Pieces on the 1757 map. A clearer picture of the area can be obtained from a detail of the 1842 tithe map. As the crow flies this would be less than a mile from Abbey Farm; but the processional route in the Middle Ages would have been by a path over present day Down Bridge to Low Street (marked on the 1619 map as 'the way from Hoxne Priory to the Street') and thence by the Hoxne-Eye road to present-day Nuttery Vale; which could be accounted Mannyng's 'grete mile'.

The question remains to be asked whether there is any evidence on the ground to corroborate this as the site of the chapel; and there is, on the south bank of the stream, south of Chapel Piece and where Rays Bridge Pieces are marked on the map, an isolated



embanked site on a rise. There is no record of a farm-house here. On the Ordnance Survey map of 1835–36, the earliest of this area, the embanked site is shown as a plantation. Alys Wellys's will described the second chapel as being 'in the wood' – though this might refer to this part of Hoxne, which was known in the Middle Ages as 'Sowood' or 'Sutwode'. If this part of the map is looked at in detail under high magnification, it looks as though, in a gap in the tree markings in the plantation and under the contour-hatchings, a cross has been placed – but possibly this is a delusion.

On the Ordnance Survey map of 1923, the plantation is named 'Raspberry Plantation' – either a local pronunciation or an interesting mutation of an unfamiliar name. Sometime later a barn was placed at the edge of this plantation, and the name changed to Raspberry Barn. It is now, alas, a piggery and under concrete.

To return to the two chapels in the Middle Ages – it had been hoped that the Hoxne Priory account-rolls would throw light on their architecture, but this has not been the case. A 'fair chappelle' in the early 14th century would probably have been built of flint, the usual material for building churches in Suffolk at that date (Cautley 1954, 16). The remaining walls of the Priory are made of flint. The only entry recording an architectural detail is in 1483: 'repairing a pinnacle/battlement [*pinnacti*]'. The windows were glazed and seem to have been vulnerable, judging by the frequent repairs – or perhaps the workmanship of local men was indifferent, since John Praty in 1458 bequeathed twenty shillings in the following terms: 'to the repair of a glass window in the Great Chapel of St Edmund of Hoxne on condition it is repaired, furnished and glazed as it ought to be' (N.R.O., 2 Briggs). Some damage was due to natural causes: in 1505 repair was necessary to 'a glass window over a door on the southern side of the chapel of St Edmund blown in by the wind'. Later in the same year, payments were made to the lead-workers for further necessary repairs to 'other glass windows'.

During the 15th century there was some rebuilding or enlargement of the Great Chapel, and of parts of the monastery. The roll for 1464 records 'In pension for 2 scholars paid for rebuilding our church vjs.'. In 1465, Bishop Brown of Norwich bequeathed the considerable sum of 40 marks to be spent on 'the work of construction of the chapel of St Edmund of Hoxne' (Jacob 1965, 47). The monastic buildings received a new dormitory in 1454, a new bakehouse in 1463, and it was at this period that a porch was added to the hall. Reeds for thatching are mentioned as late as 1486, but tiles were used as well. In 1453, 4,000 'tiles with roof tiles' were bought, and in 1463 the Lord Prior gave the cell another 4,000 tiles. In 1511 an item includes the transport of 8,000 tiles and the cost of a mason and his servant for one day.

The nature of the interior of the chapels is also difficult to discover. According to the will of Alys Wellys, there were images of St Edmund in both chapels, with tapers burning before them. No cult statues of St Edmund have survived from the Middle Ages, but he is depicted on screens as a young man, robed and crowned, holding his emblem of one or three arrows, sometimes with the wolf (which guarded his head) at his feet. In 1405 a tabernacle was purchased to be placed before his image. It was made of iron (*tab. ferra*). Some idea of what it was like is given by Dr Rock's description of one in an illumination in a 'Life of St Edmund', suspended over the altar, decorated by a corona and enclosed in a sacramental cloth.<sup>14</sup> It is referred to in the will of Robert Barker (1475) by a bequest to 'the tabernacle chapel of St Edmund of Hoxne' (N.R.O., 199 Gelour). Oil for lamps, linen cloths, repair to a chalice and similar entries refer to the maintenance of customary services. The fitting of 140ft of ironwork to the choir (reading uncertain) may refer to a screen separating the choir from the nave. The sole survivors of the fittings of the chapels are said to be six stalls now in Denham church. They are simple in style, with misericord seats decorated with floral medallions.

As the custom of going on pilgrimage and praying to saints and relics fell into disrepute, the account rolls of the 15th and 16th centuries show a decline in receipts from oblations at both chapels. There was some recovery in the 1440s, perhaps when the Great Chapel was being rebuilt or repaired and became an object of special benefaction, but towards the end of the century the drop in receipts is very marked, the average hardly reaching £2. In the early 16th century it dropped even lower, the last entry in 1534 being 16s. 0 ½ d. A similar decline in devotion is shown by the scanty bequests in those Hoxne wills that have been examined, though the rolls still record from time to time gifts from 'countrymen' and bequests from 'our dead'.

The cult came to an end, even before the Dissolution of the lesser monasteries. In 1536 Prior Castleton of Norwich Cathedral Priory leased to Richard Gresham the chapel of St Edmund with farm for a rent of £10. Two years later he sold to Gresham in a further transaction the Priory manors and estates valued at £18 0s.2d. In this valuation was included 'oblations at the image and chapel of St Robert here' – St Edmund had been confused with the more recent Bury Saint, the boy-martyr Robert. The Priory manor was sold by the Greshams to Sir Robert Southwell in 1544, and then rented on long lease to the Thurston family. At some time during the occupation of either the Greshams or the Thurstons the Great Chapel and monastic buildings were pulled down or incorporated in the dwelling-house erected on the site, part of which, as already mentioned, can be seen today at Abbey Farm (Copinger 1909, 53).

Newark Chapel had a different history: it continued to exist. Apparently it was not included in the sale of the Priory for some reason. It also survived the depredation of the Church's possessions that followed the Dissolution of the monasteries, the Commission on Chapels, Gilds, Lights etc. of 1546. In the list contained in Suffolk Chantry Certificates No. 45, entry no. 109 reads 'Hoxon – Free chapel for ease of the inhabitants. No incumbent – yearly value 11s.4d.'. No dedication is given, but there does not seem to be any chapel other than Newark to which this could apply. The other chapel in Hoxne parish 'our Lady of Chickering'<sup>15</sup> must have been destroyed by 1545, since its site was then granted to William Bolden and Robert Parker (Redstone 1904, 49, 77). The survival of Newark Chapel was probably owing to the fact that its connection with the cult of St Edmund was unknown to the Commissioners, and it was considered simply as a district chapel serving an outlying part of the parish. Even in this capacity (although continuing to exist as a building) it had ceased to function by the end of the 16th century.<sup>16</sup>

After the lapse of the cult of St Edmund and the destruction of Hoxne Priory, the connection of Hoxne with the martyrdom of the Saint was kept alive in the notes of antiquaries such as Weever, and as a folk-memory in the minds of some of the inhabitants of the village. Such was the old man who in 1949 gave Julian Tennyson a vivid account of it. The two chapels were included: 'the little ould chapel what stood on the top of the hill' and 'the little ould chapel what stood where the ould Abbey House stand against the "Lion"' (a public-house in Cross Street later burnt down) (Tennyson 1973, 149). What is more remarkable, however, is that at some stage the people of Hoxne added to the legend of the Saint a new account of his capture and execution, and one connected with a specific location in Hoxne, a bridge. The tale is told in an anonymous romantic ballad printed in *The Suffolk Garland* of 1818, where it is said to have originated from 'local people'. It relates the extraordinary story that King Edmund hid from his enemies under a bridge, but was revealed by the gleam of his golden spurs to a honeymoon couple passing over it, who betrayed him to the Danes. St Edmund, when taken prisoner, laid a curse upon all married couples, or those about to be married, who crossed the bridge.

There were earlier versions of this story. According to Father Houghton, it was already in

circulation in the 14th century, though he gives no evidence for the statement (Houghton 1970, 24). The next account is that of Edward Steele, who visited Hoxne in 1712. He knew of the tradition connecting Hoxne with St Edmund from Weever, and asked the inhabitants about it. Their reply identified a bridge with the place of the Saint's death, not his capture:

At this day [he writes] they show you a small bridge where it is said he was decollated by his Inhuman Enemies, still held by the Vulgar People as Perilous and Fatal to pass over, especially those newly entered into matrimonial honours, who never failes going through the water or some miles about rather than venture on what they believe to be so ominous; they likewise show you in the same brooke under the same bridge plenty of stones cover'd or ting'd with a beautiful armiture of gilded gold, which they attributed to the power of the Saint'.<sup>17</sup>

Unfortunately, Steele does not name the brook or state where in Hoxne the 'little bridge' was to be found. The description of the golden stones at the bottom of the stream, as well as its name, point to the 'Goldbrook' where it flows over a sandy, gravelly bottom. As regards the bridge, four bridges are contained in the 17th-century extent already mentioned (S.R.O.I., HB 18:51/10/18.6). Of these the only one that spans the Goldbrook today is Rasebridge. If this was the bridge in Steele's narrative, and if there was some oral tradition linking it with the death of St Edmund, it might explain why the Rasebridge area was chosen for the site of Newark Chapel.

This idea helps to solve a problem not elucidated by the Hoxne Priory account rolls – which chapel served which facet of the dual legend of the Saint's martyrdom: his execution, and the miracle of the finding of the head and its rejoining the body. The lines from Robert Mannyng's poem already quoted state that the 'fair chapelle' was devoted to the miracle, and 'tother' less impressive building to the martyrdom. It follows from this that the veneration of the miraculous head was celebrated in the Great Chapel of the Priory, that of the martyrdom at Newark Chapel.

This conclusion is contrary to the modern view, which, ignoring the miraculous element in the legend and in any case having forgotten the existence of Newark Chapel, places the capture and death of the Saint in the area near Abbey Farm.

The bridge at present accepted as the scene of the capture and subject to the curse of the Saint is known as Goldbrook Bridge, and is near the centre of the village, on the Denham road. It may have replaced an earlier bridge of which there is no sign, but certainly it is not the bridge shown to Steele in 1712, since it was not erected till 1878, 'for the purpose of carrying a new road across the Goldbrook which would connect Low Street with Cross Street'.<sup>18</sup> For construction purposes the bridge was built at some distance from the stream and a new bed cut into which the stream was diverted.<sup>19</sup> There must have been at the time some association of the 'Gold Spurs' story with 'Goldbrook' since an inscription was incorporated into the bridge stating 'King Edmund captured here A.D. 870'. This was repeated on the Ordnance Survey map for 1886 and has been generally accepted ever since.

By the 19th century, and as late as 1934, histories of Hoxne Priory stated that the cell had been erected over the burial-place of St Edmund (Messent 1934, 132). It was natural, therefore, that an oak-tree called St Edmund's Oak, said to be 1,000 years old, standing in a field near Abbey Farm, should have been thought of as the tree to which the saint had been bound and shot with arrows before being beheaded. This seemed to be confirmed when in 1848 it fell by its own weight and a piece of iron thought to be an arrow-head was found embedded in the timber five feet from the ground. A stone cross was put up on the site of the fallen tree by Sir Edward Kerrison, bart., lord of the manor, in 1879 with an inscription commemorating the Saint; and when this was destroyed by lightning in 1907, it was

replaced by one in granite that can be seen there today. It fell into disrepair after the sale of the Kerrison estate, but has recently been restored through the efforts of Hoxne inhabitants (Kirwan 1982).

The care for the monument is one sign that St Edmund and his legend are actively remembered in Hoxne today. Some brides still 'go about' to avoid Goldbrook Bridge rather than risk the curse of the Saint on the future of their marriage. Recently a play based on his legend was written by a local farmer, Mr John Ball of Abbey Farm, and produced in the village hall to capacity audiences. These secular doings are far in spirit from the pious pilgrimages to the two chapels in the Middle Ages, but there is a continuity in the association of the village with the Saint that has lasted some seven centuries. Perhaps it is time that etymology was supplemented by a more just appreciation of the contribution made by Hoxne to the history of the St Edmund legend.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply grateful to Miss Barbara Dodwell for the help she has given me in gathering the material for this article, and to her and Mrs Nesta Evans for reading and commenting on the typescript. I am grateful to the Rev. John Draper for drawing my attention to the Edward Steele collections and allowing me to use his transcript, and to Miss Jean Kennedy, County Archivist of Norfolk, for answering queries about Hoxne parochial history. I have also benefited much from the interest and co-operation of Mrs Nora Coleman, and in particular am grateful for her map of the Chapel Piece area of Hoxne (Fig. 36). I owe to Miss Dodwell and Mrs Rosemary Harvey the translation of the Hoxne Account Rolls. Mr Norman Scarfe has given me valuable advice on preparing this article for publication.

#### NOTES

- 1 Arnold 1890, 1, 3–25; Winterbottom 1722, 67–87.
- 2 Dodwell 1960, no. 6 states that Ralph the Dapifer built the chapel from its foundations (i.e., on its original site).
- 3 Gransden 1981, 190; 'Bishop Theodred's will proves that East Anglia had two sees, one at Hoxne for Suffolk'.
- 4 N.R.O., compotus of Stephen Mose, 1326–27 (Dean and Chapter records, 4144, R 232 B).
- 5 S.R.O.I., HD 40: 422.
- 6 V.C.H., *Suffolk*, II, 76.
- 7 Hoxne Priory Cartulary, Elveden MSS, S.R.O.I.
- 8 Information from Mr Norman Scarfe.
- 9 S.R.O.I., HA 85: 404/752.
- 10 Information from Mr Derek Mager, the present owner.
- 11 Identified by Dr S.E. West.
- 12 S.R.O.I., HB 18: 51/10/18.6, f. 25.
- 13 I have consulted a photocopy of this document; the original is so far untraced.
- 14 Rock 1849–53, III, Part 2, 206, quoted in Lee 1863, Part 1, 311–15.
- 15 'The chapel of St Mary was in this parish' (N.R.O., Tanner, Index to Institution Books, Hoxne, f. 992).
- 16 Information from Miss J. Kennedy, County Archivist of Norfolk.
- 17 Bodl.: Steele, 'Collections for Hoxton Suffk. 1712'; MS Gough Norfolk 25, ff. 64–71; MS Top. Gen. e 79, ff. 310–17 Sffk 1712.
- 18 Hoxne parish vestry minute book, 1848–84, S.R.O.I., FC 82/A1/2).
- 19 Information supplied by Col. John Fuller of Hoxne from *Proc. Soc. Antiq.* VIII (minutes of meeting of 20 Mar. 1879).

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*Abbreviations for MSS*

Bodl.	Bodleian Library, Oxford.
D.B.	Domesday Book
N.R.O.	Norfolk Record Office
P.R.O.	Public Record Office.
S.R.O.I.	Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich Branch.
Windsor	Dean and Chapter Library, Windsor: Hoxne Priory account rolls, W.R., 1.C.1-39.