

ST EDMUND'S CATHOLIC PARISH

CHRONICLE

CATHOLIC HISTORY IN AND AROUND

BURY ST EDMUNDS



ST EDMUND'S CHURCH HISTORY GROUP

Photograph: Interior of St Edmund's Church 2024

CONTENTS

Section A	Acknowledgements, Foreword, Introduction
Section B	The presence of the Jesuits
Section C	The remainder of the 20 th century
Section D	The 21 st century
Section E	Saints associated with the Church
Section F	A guide to St Edmund's Church and Chapel
Section G	Remembering the War years
Section H	Catholicism around Bury St Edmunds
Section I	Welcome to our Parish
Section J	Clergy of the Parish, List of Assets Past and Present, Sources/signpost for further research

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This chronicle has been compiled from a variety of sources and the authors wish to thank everyone who has contributed to its content. Deserving of particular thanks are those who conducted or assisted research, made suggestions or gave advice on publication. The assistance given by Mary Allen and Lucy Vinten Mattich from the Farm Street archives has been exceptional, especially in documenting the Jesuits' time in Bury St Edmunds. Similarly, considerable help was afforded by Fauziah Iskandar the Assistant Librarian of Heythrop Library and Fr Roger Dawson and Brother Alan Harrison of St Beuno's Jesuit Spirituality Centre.

Photographs used within the chronicle have kindly been made available by David and Elizabeth Bouttell, David Bowden, John Saunders, Sarah Green, Margaret Charlesworth, Suffolk Regiment Museum, the family of Karel Valach and the Bury Free Press. Those pertaining to the time of the Jesuits in Bury St Edmunds have been approved for publication from the Jesuits in Britain Archives and Trustees for Roman Catholic Purposes Registered in whom copyright is vested – their willingness to grant publication has markedly enriched this chronicle.

The assistance of The War Graves Photographic Project and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in regard to Section 'G' is specially acknowledged.

All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without the permission in writing of the author.

First published 2018. Updated editions published 2020, 2024

© 2020 St Edmund's History Group

Members of St Edmund's Church History Group in 2024:

David Bowden, Philomena Brunner, Stephen Brunner, RoseMarie Counihan, Jo Donlevy, Tracey Enningham, Cathy Friel, Sarah Green, Jean Heaslip, Barbara Heathcote, James Heathcote, Donald Hunt, Patricia Needham, Hugh O'Neil, Peter Reilly, John Saunders, Mark Shakespeare, Brian Waghorn, Mari Lou Waghorn.

They acknowledge the valuable contributions made by previous members John (Jack) Steggles and Claire Robinson who passed away respectively in 2016 and 2019. They are also grateful to the assistance given by other past members.

FOREWORD

Appointment to a new parish comes with a list of imperatives. Quickly get to know one's fellow clergy and parishioners, the key organisations that ensure the parish functions, finance, education ... the list is endless and demanding. It is also important to understand parish history which assists in identifying what has worked well and what might be capable of improvement. Often this emerges through word of mouth with senior parishioners who may not accurately recall the past or by the need to spend time researching documents that may not be readily at hand.

In September 2023 I arrived as priest in charge of the Church of St Edmund King and Martyr. I faced all those imperatives and the challenge of obtaining an accurate background. However, rather uniquely, I was able to get an instant feel of the history of the parish by viewing this excellent chronicle produced by the History Group. Not only is their work an example of the importance of recording past events but it shows that what happens in our modern days will become tomorrow's history.

Our patron Saint, Edmund refused to renounce his Christian faith and sacrificed his life to this end. This chronicle highlights the sacrifices that have been made by others since, resulting in them suffering oppression and death, reminding us of the debt we owe to those who maintained our missions at Lawshall, Hengrave and Great Barton and created our Presbytery, Chapel, Church and schools in Bury St Edmunds.

I am reminded that the year 2020 was intended to celebrate the 1000th anniversary of the founding of the Abbey of St Edmund. Although those celebrations were impeded by Covid-19, it is testament to our parishioners and the town's wider population that diverse communities were brought together in 2022 by events that themselves are now etched in history. Central to them was the Abbey's origin which stemmed from the arrival of Benedictine monks in 1020 who cared for the shrine of St Edmund until the Abbey's dissolution in 1539. The Abbey proved immensely important to pilgrims who came from Europe and beyond and was the place where Magna Carta was formulated. It is at the heart of our town's motto, *Shrine of the King, Cradle of the Law*, words that remind us of our Catholic roots.

Our devotion to Edmund continues as our Catholic Church is the only religious institution in town to commemorate in its title his name, sovereignty and cause of death.

The chronicle allows us to appreciate our history and we are grateful to John Saunders and his team for producing such a detailed and helpful piece of work which serves a range of purposes.

Sean Connolly

Fr Sean Connolly

2024

INTRODUCTION

St Edmund's Church History Group is a small body of volunteers from the parish who meet occasionally to ensure that the history and heritage of our Church is maintained. Our first main achievement was the publication of a booklet *'The Present From Our Past'* but time does not stand still and updates were made in 2018 and 2023. The variety of projects undertaken by our Group is itself testimony to the dedication of members, including commemorating wartime events; talks, tours and exhibitions; cataloguing materials for Suffolk Archives; compiling a record of the assets of the Church; contributing to Diocesan history.

Originally produced under the name *Years of Faith*, the decision was made in 2024 to re-badge it as *St Edmund's Church Chronicle*. This better describes its purpose of recording the events of the past and those in recent times with the ability to add or subtract facts that emerge through the Group's research.

The online publication of the chronicle allows it to be capable of amendment without reproducing a hard copy. The chronicle does not purport to be a conventional book that is tied to historic facts; it stretches to the present on the basis that today's events will be tomorrow's history. It enables the reader to explore in an unstructured fashion and it is environmentally friendly because you do not have to print the pieces you may not wish to retain. It depends on where and how you want to start your literary journey. Those wishing to absorb the history from Jesuit times may wish to commence at Section 'B'; visitors seeking to use the chronicle as a guide will find Section 'F' the logical starting point; newcomers might be reassured by the experiences of others who came to settle in the parish as described in Section 'I'; there are those who might be planning to visit other nearby locations and will beforehand appreciate the contents of Section 'H'. In whatever order you read, we hope that the entire content will prove enlightening.

Names of people who have a special place in the history of the Church of St Edmund King and Martyr are featured in this chronicle but of course there are many others past and present who have made a huge contribution to Catholicism in the town – omissions are not because they are regarded as in any way less important. It is the combination of the contribution of individuals and the parish as a whole that has maintained our faith, something that in our present times of change and challenge we should recognise and be prepared to carry forward into the future.

Two expressions, 'history repeats itself' and 'we must learn from the mistakes of the past' entwine in our lives – we need to find out what happened in the past, what was good or bad before we can learn how to realise our future. Acquainting ourselves with the past is an important step and we hope that dipping in and out this chronicle will help your journey forward.

John Saunders

Chair of St Edmunds History Group

2024