

SECTION 'D' - THE 21st CENTURY

2001 – 2014 Fr Philip Shryane

St Edmund's had for over thirty years been suffering from the premature departure of its priests. Fr Houghton's departure in 1969 seemed to have accelerated the turnover rate. The year of 2001 saw the arrival of Fr Philip Shryane. Ordained in 1975 for the former diocese of Northampton, Fr Philip, as he became known to all, arrived in Bury St Edmunds from St George's, Norwich. He immediately cemented sound ecumenical relationships within the town and achieved great respect from the wider community.



The achievements of Sr Sheila McGovern were recognised with the award of the Pro Ecclesia Et Pontifice medal in January 2005 at a special Mass in West Belfast. Presented to people who have made a special contribution in the different areas of Church work, Sr Sheila had worked tirelessly over the 50 years that she had been a nun in the Order of St Louis in Ireland, Nigeria and the 20 years spent in Bury St Edmunds.

Bishop Michael Evans made his first visit in February 2005. Later in the year he led the diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes. Building work began after Easter to make ramped access to the club. Full access to the toilets was also essential. The cost of £46,000 had already been put aside.

On 14 May AGAPE (a Greek celebration of Christian love) stories were performed in the Church. Proceeds went to St Nicholas's Hospice in memory of Ann Winning who had died in December. She was a parishioner, a former teacher at St Edmund's school and later Head of Thurston School.

An appeal was made for clothes for Fr Tim Peacock to be sent to help the poorest folk in Zimbabwe. Fr Tim had local connections, his mother having resided at Lawshall.

The new website for the parish was set up in February 2006. In April the Sisters of the Assumption left Hengrave. In July Alan McMahon celebrated his ordination as Permanent Deacon. The LIFE group led a discussion in the club about stem cell research.

Following a message from our twin diocese of the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem about the dire situation in Gaza and the West Bank parishioners were asked to write to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

The Housekeeper/Cook, Aline Hargreaves, retired in November along with the Presbytery cleaner, Norma Evans after longstanding service to the priests and the parish.

Our young folk recorded a compact disc of Christmas music and sold cakes after Mass, all to raise funds for World Youth Day in Sydney 2008.

During 2005 we began a twinning link with the parish of St John in Siem Reap in Cambodia, a place that most people had not really heard of except for the horrors of the Pol Pot regime in the 1970s. In January 2006 Fr Philip went to visit the parish and came back with many stories of the work of the Church there among very poor people and its deprived communities. In June we welcomed three young people from Cambodia for a five week visit to England. They had a wonderful visit and were made very welcome by the people of St Edmund's. Our links continued and in January 2007 Fr Philip took the first group of 20 parishioners to pay a return visit to Siem Reap. This twinning link has been maintained, raising money, supporting projects and exchange visits, bringing great benefit to both parishes.

The Catholic population in Bury St Edmunds in 2005 was recorded as 3,800, with attendance at Mass being 880. There were 50 baptisms, 14 marriages and 3 receptions into the Church.

In January 2007, week-long united services and lunches were held in successive Churches – St Edmunds, Garland Street Baptists, Trinity Methodists, St Edmundsbury Cathedral, Ixworth Methodists and the United Reformed Church.

Fr Shryane led the Parish to recognise that everyone in life had a part to play and was important in the eyes of our Lord. Irrespective of the physical or mental challenges facing people, they were embraced, for example signed Masses for those with impaired hearing. From our twin diocese and school at Ain Arik three Palestinian teachers came to our parish to sell hand-made religious objects. A Syro-Malabar pilgrimage took place on 5 August to Walsingham for a rite of Mass in Malayalam.

On 7 October 2007 the newly formed organisation Helping Hands to assist those who needed help of a practical nature reported that 20 requests for their services had been made in five weeks. They recorded Midnight Mass and other Masses on a DVD for the benefit of the housebound parishioners.

The History Group proposed a carved plaque to commemorate our parish priests and this was installed in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel (the chronology of priests is included in Section 'J' and records some minor amendments since the plaque was created).

The St Edmund's Day dinner was held at Clarice House. There was an appeal for help with the Gatehouse Christmas lunch.

As the decade continued work within the Parish was shouldered by Fr Shryane, supported whenever possible by Frs Quigley (of Lawshall), Mason and Mercer, all of whom were in ill health. The assistance for a short period of Fr Martin Fears and of Deacons Alan McMahon and Chris Heath and laypeople became even more important in sustaining parish life.

Consultation with parishioners remained fundamental to the future, discussions centring upon proposed structural changes/redecoration of the Church, Chapel and Crypt. Changes to the liturgy were also on the horizon.

An all too familiar situation was apparent – vocations were never more important to the future but there was wonderful news when one of our parishioners, Henry Whisenant entered the seminary at Oscott to train for the priesthood for our Diocese.

In 2012 the History Group published a booklet entitled *'The Present From Our Past'* at a time when much was happening at the Church of St Edmund King and Martyr, Westgate Street, Bury St Edmunds. In fact, the profits from that booklet contributed in a significant way to an ambitious overall project launched by Fr Philip Shryane to raise £500,000, the cost of renovating and redecorating the Crypt, Chapel and Church. After much consultation and conferring with appropriate authorities, work began.

The Crypt

The Crypt had long been used for a variety parish and social activities including the staging of plays, whist drives and dances; as an additional teaching area and dining room for pupils of St Edmund's School; as premises for the many parish clubs and associations; as a members' social club and originally a place of burial. Although at intervals it had benefited from alteration and decoration it was in much need of a makeover. Its transformation in 2011 was dramatic, resulting in a hall that was not only fit and comfortable for its modern purposes but had been tastefully restored to expose its brickwork and archways, features that had been somewhat obscured in intervening works. It created an area in which parishioners could congregate for meetings and events, and was available for private hire for family functions as well as being the home of St Edmund's Social Club.

Fundraising involved a range of initiatives including Fr Shryane providing £10 to parishioners, encouraging them to mirror the parable and use their talents to increase the amount.



It also brought together teams of Catholics and non-Catholics for a competitive town trail followed by tea in the newly renovated Crypt.

Fr Shryane enthused, *"The re-opening of the Crypt gave the incentive and the will on my part and yours to go forward. I felt from that time on the people of St Edmund's trusted me to do a good job!"*

During the weekend 23 – 25 November 2012 an event entitled *'Treating Your Senses'*, organised by John Saunders, was held with 25 separate parts. This included displays of registers, vestments and memorabilia within the Church. Talks were provided and attracted the interest of many people who were unaware of the significance of the Catholic history of Bury St Edmunds. The event also encompassed musical performances in the

Church and Crypt, cookery demonstrations, floral displays and the exhibition of art and craft. The Indian, Polish and Filipino communities generously provided food to enable people to experience different cultural tastes. The weekend drew together many members of the Catholic community, attracted visitors from elsewhere and raised £3,400.

The Chapel



That weekend also heralded the completion of work within the original Chapel at a cost of £58,000. This was commemorated more formally on 8 December 2012 when a congregation of around 200 gathered to mark its 250th anniversary.

A special blessing of the Chapel, its altar and tabernacle formed part of a celebratory Mass presided over by Fr David Bagstaff who had been appointed Diocesan Administrator following the death of Bishop

Michael Evans. He was joined by past and present clergy and Fr Matthew Power representing the Society of Jesus. Fr Shryane acknowledged the craftsmanship which had preserved the beauty and tranquillity of the Chapel whilst making it more accessible to those with disability – his tributes included the architect Charles Brown; Bream's builders for the carpentry and painting; the upholstery skills of Cindy Mason and David Wall for the Chapel's 40 chairs each of which cost £80 (some of which were sponsored by parishioners), and the carpeting provided by Rod Jourdan.

The Mass brought together diverse parish groups and included invited guests of other denominations. Music blended the traditional choir and young musicians. After Mass, a large gathering took place in the Crypt.



The Church

Built in 1837, and one of the oldest Catholic parish churches in East Anglia, the Church of St Edmund King and Martyr in Westgate Street, Bury St Edmunds closed its doors on 5 January 2014. However, this was only a temporary measure whilst the final part of the project of redecoration and restoration was

carried out. The Church had previously been redecorated in during the times of Fr Houghton

(1959/60) and Fr Wace (not as shown on page 31 of *'The Present From Our Past'*) and it had then been possible for the liturgy to be celebrated.

This time however the scope of the work and the requisite scaffolding necessitated closure. Throughout the restoration video recordings were made to show the state of progress.

It was necessary for services to be held elsewhere including the Crypt, St Edmund's and St Benedict's Schools. On Ash Wednesday Mass was celebrated at the United Reformed Church.

The Church reopened on 13 April 2014, significantly Eastertide, the time of resurrection and new life. The project had involved a range of contractors with the primary work being undertaken by Breams at a cost of £170,000, local builders and contractors. Other firms included Milbury Scaffolding; Welton's Electricians; Alexandra Carrington Decorative Stone & Plaster Conservator; Campbell Smith and Company Limited, specialist painting contractors. The satisfactory conclusion of the project was materially assisted with money received from the Kristina Martin Trust and The Suffolk Historic Churches Trust and was added to by the generosity of parishioners and the sterling fundraising efforts of the community. That the project was completed without incurring huge debt was a tribute to the planning of Fr Philip Shryane, the Parish Finance Committee and the Parish Pastoral Council.

The magnificent decoration skillfully retained the past image but was enhanced by a light and tranquil ambience. Additions included a new altar, upgrading the communications system, new carpeting and lighting.

Whilst the improvements to the Church, Chapel and Crypt provided the main focus over a period of three years, many other pieces of history were being created, requiring the booklet *'The Present From Our Past'* to be superseded.

In December 2012 the decision was taken to no longer provide Parish Mass books, these being replaced by the opportunity to purchase Sunday Missals for personal use.

The death in 2012 occurred of Fr Anthony Sketch who had been ordained at Bury St Edmunds 50 years previously.

The Parish bulletin of 6 January 2013 issued a reminder to resume the practice of genuflecting to the Blessed Sacrament in the Chapel when entering Church as an expression of faith in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Encouragement was given to teach children how and why this should occur.

The news in February 2013 of the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI due to his declining health was received with inevitable sadness and understanding but with optimism that his successor Pope Francis (the first Pope from the Americas) would take the Church forward in a changing and difficult world.

On 6 July 2013 the ordination of Deacon Henry Whisenant took place at St John's Cathedral in Norwich witnessed by his family and friends who added to a full congregation that included clergy, fellow seminarians and Fr Panus and two visitors from Siem Reap. The following day, Fr Henry celebrated his first Mass in St Edmund's Church before taking up his first appointment as assistant priest at the parish of Our Lady and the English Martyrs at Cambridge.

On 16 July 2013 Bishop Alan Hopes was installed at St John's Cathedral, Norwich at a service attended by a contingent from the parish.

Fr Henry Whisenant celebrated Mass in the afternoon of 8 August 2013 in the Abbey Gardens near the site of the High Altar. This began the annual Saint John Paul II pilgrimage for the new evangelisation led by the Dominican Sisters of St Joseph. Pilgrims stayed in the town before setting out on the 50 miles route to Walsingham.

The 32nd sponsored bike ride/walk in aid of Suffolk Historic Churches Trust took place on 14 September 2013 in which Fr Shryane participated. This annual event continued to receive support from the parish but between 2011 and 2014 the Trust generously gave grants amounting to £23,000 towards the work carried out to the Church, Chapel and Crypt.

A new director of music, Patricia Mason, was appointed in September 2013 and she embarked on a campaign to attract new members. She replaced Marie-Therese Cunningham who had given years of sterling service and who, in recognition, had received a Papal Blessing on 16 December 2012.

The marble altar that had been installed during the time of Fr Houghton had been described by him as a sarcophagus but further studies revealed that its most probable previous use had been as a bath! The following inscriptions had been made inside the bath: J Tuffin; Robert Simon Last (RIP), 3 Boyne Road, BSE; C J Emms (known as Emo), 127 Priors Road, BSE; C Palmer; Fixer: J Coffey; All dated 22 9 64. The weight of the marble was estimated around 4.5 tons. The bath had a seat at one end and a plughole at the other; it contained a pre-decimal penny dated 1961. Its removal from the Church was accomplished between 28 November and 2 December 2011 by Harvey Frost Builders of Bury St Edmunds. The plaque in memory of George Pemberton shown in Section 'C' was relegated to a free-standing position in the porch.

The decision was made for the bath to be sold at auction in September 2013 when it realised the sum of £3,600.

In October 2013 Fr Tim Peacock, a former resident of Bury St Edmunds, visited St Edmund's and Lawshall. His work in Hwange diocese, Zimbabwe, often in difficult conditions, continued and as well as ongoing support from parishioners, a donation of £500 was given.

The solemnity of St Edmund in 2013 on 20 November was marked with evening prayer at which Dean Frances Ward of St Edmundsbury Cathedral preached. This was followed by a gathering in the Crypt.

Further consultation relating to the Church took place in November 2013. Parishioners were invited to vote whether the tapestries of St Edmund in the Church should be retained; whether the elaborate architraves that framed the doorway to the Blessed Sacrament Chapel and the rear of the Lady altar should be removed; the design of the new altar. It was felt that 51% was not sufficiently conclusive to remove the architraves and pediments that had not been an original feature of the Church so they were retained as were the tapestries. Many observations were submitted as to the design of a new altar.

The generosity of the Parish was apparent in December 2013 in sending £4,500 to support St John's Parish in Siem Reap and in the Christmas collection which amounted to £6,037.36.

On 28 April 2014 a service was held for the dedication of the new altar and for the blessing of the Church after its redecoration and renovation, details of which are more fully described in Section 'F'.

An Ecumenical Evening Prayer at St Edmund's the following month enabled people from other denominations to view the restoration and refurbishment. Approximately 60 attended including members of the Cathedral and the Churches of Southgate, St Peter, St Mary and the United Reformed Church and afterwards they enjoyed refreshments in the Crypt.

Having become parish priest in 2001, the time came for Fr Philip Shryane to depart in September 2014. Initially he undertook a sabbatical for four months in Siem Reap, the Cambodian parish with which St Edmund's is twinned before moving to St Mary's at Great Yarmouth. Amongst his treasured memories of his time at St Edmund's he cited, *"The amazing, generous and heart-warming support I received around the time of my mum's final illness and her death. I also think of the Church as it is now as the finished article. I never liked it before; it was dark and dull, now it has life and colour and is beautiful in the sunlight."* The example of Fr Shryane in making the parish an inclusive community, promoting the importance of family life and preserving our place of worship very much etched him into our history.

2014 – 2019 Fr Mark Hackeson

Succeeding Fr Shryane was Fr Mark Hackeson who celebrated his first Mass at St Edmund's on 7 September 2015, the date coinciding with his 50th birthday. On 30 October 2014 he was inducted as Parish Priest at Mass celebrated by Bishop Alan Hopes. The customary social gathering in the Crypt followed.

The St Edmund's Day dinner was held at Edmund Restaurant, West Suffolk College on 22 November.

Alan Hodgson, having previously been employed by British Airways until October 2014, moved into the Presbytery the following month to enable him to gain pastoral experience before beginning final seminary studies. A new and popular face he proved a huge asset in assisting Fr Mark and fully committed himself to working in the community. In September 2015 he headed off to St Bede's seminary, Beda in Rome to continue his studies for the priesthood.

Having spent over 28 years of his priesthood in the parish, on 26 March 2015 Fr Gerry Quigley celebrated his 40th anniversary with Mass followed by a reception in the Crypt. Since 2000 he had been resident at the Church of Our Lady Immaculate and St Joseph, otherwise known as Coldham Cottage, Lawshall and had done much both there and within Bury St Edmunds particularly in support of young people. His ability to relate to the younger generation was perhaps assisted by his contemporary style – clad in black leather as he rode his motor cycle!

The Cross of Evangelisation was in St Edmund's Parish between 10 and 16 May 2015 as part of a pilgrimage of prayer around the diocese. This was an icon painted by young people, including students from St Benedict's School, for the end of the Year of Faith. 40 hours of exposition of the Blessed Sacrament which drew parishioners and visitors day and night into the church and prayer was held at St Edmund's Church. The icon visited all four Catholic schools and Montana and in each a whole day of prayer was celebrated.

Over the weekend of 30/31 May 2015 the 'Annual Celebrate – East Anglia' was held at St Benedict's School with Mass being celebrated, teachings, groups for children and young people, praise, worship, education, workshops and drama.

Corpus Christi was celebrated on 7 June 2015 with the First Holy Communicants' Thanksgiving Mass in Church, followed by the Blessed Sacrament being venerated by parishioners along Westgate Street and Friar's Lane and Benediction in St Edmund's Primary School.

Having enjoyed Fr Quigley's 40th anniversary of ordination, it was time to do likewise for Fr Philip Shryane who returned to St Edmund's on 27 June 2015 for his celebration. A full congregation comprised people from all previous parishes in which he had served and the Mass was poignant for its inclusiveness with many from ethnic groups and the deaf community attending. A high proportion of the congregation joined him and members of his family in the Crypt afterwards.

On 28 September 2015 Monsignor Kike Figaredo, the Apostolic Prefect of our twin Diocese of Battambang in Cambodia visited Bury St Edmunds.

In November 2015 Fr Alvan Ibeh of the congregation of the Sons of Mary Mother of Mercy arrived as one of the assistant priests of the Parish. Coming from Nigeria he encountered the huge difference in culture and climate but quickly settled and showed himself to be popular, a great asset to our community and with those from other faiths whilst giving much needed support to Fr Hackeson.

On 22 November 2015 the feast of St Edmund was celebrated at 10.30 am Mass, attended by the High Sheriff of Suffolk, the Mayor of St Edmundsbury, Councillors and representatives of the community, the Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of St Edmundsbury and presided over by our own Bishop, Alan Hopes. Afterwards, tea and cakes were served in St Edmund's School to parishioners to thank them for their patience during building work which had recently occurred at the School.

Between 29 November and 13 December 2015 our Catholic schools created and exhibited Christmas cribs within the Church. Parishioners were also encouraged to participate in the old Mexican Advent tradition of Posada where crib figures of Mary and Joseph would be moved between their houses and hosted by them in their windows as a reminder of the journey leading up to the nativity to re-enact the nativity.

In February 2016 the sound system in the Church was improved. However, the downside was the malfunctioning of the heating system which seemed a perennial problem especially during periods of cold weather.

In 2016 the decision was taken to provide three statues in the Church, representative of each of the three main ethnic minorities that had settled in the parish. These are more fully described in Section 'F'.

On 17 March 2016 Fr Mark Hackeson (front row, 2nd left) was installed at a Solemn Mass at St John's Cathedral, Norwich as one of nine Canons forming the Cathedral Chapter and College of Consultors. The Chapter was designed to create a clearer line of governance and consultation with the clergy and laity of the Diocese.



On 1 May 2016 at the 8.30 am and 10.30 am Masses a total of 30 young people received Holy Communion for the first time.

A parishioner, Julia Wakelam became Mayor of St Edmundsbury in May 2016 and led an extremely active year not only in the discharge of her mayoral duties but in services within St Edmund's Church. Her tenure significantly contributed to a wider understanding of Catholicism across the Borough. On 3 July the Mayor's Civic service was celebrated in Church, accompanied by young people from all of our schools who joined the choir in leading the music and singing. The diversity of the town was notable with an impressive procession of national flags.

The parish bulletin indicated that there had been some understandable disquiet following the publication of the parish accounts for 2015 which showed a deficit (not a debt) for the year. The lack of a supporting report to explain the figures was considered by Fr Hackeson as regrettable and although the matter was discussed at a PPC meeting, it was decided to call a special meeting on 18 July 2016 to enable concerns and questions to be aired. It was reiterated that the parish was not in debt, the explanation being that in 2015 more was spent than received due to the main necessary works on buildings that would not be repeated in succeeding years. This had required dipping into reserves.

On 19 July 2016 there was a huge gathering at St Edmundsbury Cathedral of those who had connections with St Louis Middle School on the occasion of their last Mass. There was palpable sadness at the decision to close the School which had brought educational richness to the parish and the town for the previous 40 years and was rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted. The moving service represented the contributions of pupils, staff, governors and clergy past and present. That month also saw the retirement of Hugh O'Neil from his position as Head of St Benedict's School.

On 8 September 2016 the parish mourned the death of Fr Paul Mercer who, since his ordination in 2001 and despite ill health, had practised his ministry at St Edmund's Church and as Chaplain at Montana in Great Barton.

Parishioners of three newly refurbished churches in the deanery engaged in a 'church crawl' on 24 September starting with Mass at St Mary's Church Thetford, a lunchtime talk at St Edmund's by John Saunders on the history of the Church and concluding the journey at the Church of Our Lady, Stowmarket

In September 2016 on the occasion of her 90th birthday, Joy Rowe a leading historian of Catholicism in East Anglia, was presented with the Diocesan Medal by Fr David Finegan of Stowmarket. Not only was she nationally acclaimed but she had been a significant supporter of St Edmund's Church History Group.

Sadly, on 27 September the death of Jack Steggle occurred. He had been a staunch supporter of the St Edmund's History Group and co-author of *'The Present from Our Past'*. An extremely interesting character and devout Catholic, Jack was blessed with a wealth of knowledge across so many subjects, a wry sense of humour and occasional irreverence in his comments.

The feast of St Edmund was celebrated on 16 November 2016, the 10.30 am Mass being attended by Councillor Julia Wakeham and other civic dignitaries.

'Alive in Faith' was launched in March 2017 to raise spiritual awareness and funding for vocations and retired clergy.

To celebrate 30 years of Bury in Bloom's organisation being established as part of the Bury Society, 30 trees were planted in the town amongst which was a tree (*Sorbus Vilmorinii*) planted in the raised bed next to the Church ramp which had been donated as part of the 'Love where you live' initiative. It was an example of the energy of St Edmund's Church Gardening Group in keeping the environs of the Church as attractive as possible.

On 18 June 2017 Mass at 10.30 am was celebrated at Moreton Hall School for the whole parish, to enable children to receive their first Holy Communion.

A sponsored walk by Church Altar Servers, organised by Damian Wallace took place on 15 July 2017 to raise funds for a new chair for Kieran Horgan which would better facilitate a range of movements including standing up and lying down.

In September the new Saturday ritual Mass was introduced, involving singers and instrumentalists.

The equivalent of Harvest Festival took place on 8 October 2017 when parishioners were invited to bring gifts of food to be auctioned in the Crypt after the 10.30 am Mass funds with the money raised being used to provide teachers and rice soup for the children in the schools of the twin parish of Siem Reap.

'Alive in Faith' concluded having raised £1.8 million across the diocese, resulting in 14 projects in various parishes utilising the money available. The diocese had 13 seminarians at varying stages of training. Plans were also being developed to provide accommodation and support for retired priests.

The feast of St Edmund was celebrated on 19 November 2017 with the Mayor, Terry Clements in attendance.

The parish Advent Carol service was held on 8 December 2017 with a selection of music and readings led by adults and young people of the Saturday evening choir followed by mulled wine and mince pies in the Crypt.

The end of 2017 saw the departure of Fr Peter Sok Na who had spent almost six months in Bury St Edmunds.

In February 2018 the Bishop's Lenten Mass was held at St Edmund's Church. The Lenten programme included exposition and confessions, Mass, soups and refreshments in the Crypt. Some members of the parish travelled to Cambodia and were able to meet Fr Sok Na alongside the River Ton le Sap.

In April 2018 in response to a request from Bishop Alan Hopes, a new Tabernacle and free-standing lamp was installed to the left of the Sanctuary to enable more discreet access to the reserved Sacrament during the celebration of Sunday Masses. Ideally, only those hosts consecrated at a particular Mass were to be used for Holy Communion at that Mass. The hosts reserved in the Tabernacle were primarily to be used in communion for the sick and for devotion to Christ truly present in his body and blood. It was felt that the transfer of the ciborium from the Chapel drew attention from the Lord who was already present on the Altar. The Bishop requested that this should be a temporary measure whilst the design, production and purchase of a more permanent hanging pyx which would be suspended centrally above the altar could be considered.

In April 2018 congratulations to Dickon Fincham-Jacques were recorded because his ordering of the sung Mass of St Benedict had received full approval from the Bishops' Conference Liturgy Committee. The history of St Albans Catholic School which existed between 1971 and 2000 was published in a booklet '*Ahead of its Time*' written by John Saunders.

The requiem Mass for Chris Harding was held on 26 April 2018. A former teacher, who had a flamboyant and somewhat eccentric style, he held the respect and gratitude of many former pupils of St Benedict's Upper School. As a Catholic he had been a beacon of his faith in his younger days as an Altar Server and member of the Blessed Sacrament Guild.

The annual international Mass was celebrated in May 2018 with the colourful spectacle of national flags in a procession from the car park into Church. On 19 May, as part of the international weekend, members from the parish described their cultural differences in talks delivered in the Crypt.

The first publication of '*Years of Faith*' on the parish website occurred in June 2018. During that month participation again took place with the Presbytery garden being open to the public as part of 'Hidden Gardens of Bury', the fundraiser for St Nicholas Hospice.

The retirement of Fr Gerry Quigley in July 2018 brought an end to a lengthy period of service at St Edmund's and Lawshall, also encompassing ministry at St Benedict's School, RAF Honington and HMP Highpoint. Having arrived in the parish in the 1980s and achieving 42 years since his ordination, Fr Gerry had become a great friend to those who knew him and had fulfilled parish duties in spite of ill health. He was presented with a television, two statues and a monetary gift following his retirement Mass on 27 June 2018.

On 27 July Christine Mason invited friends and parishioners to join her for the blessing of Fr Bill Mason's headstone at Kedington.

A total of £400 was raised by a strawberry tea held in the Presbytery Garden in July 2018.

In August 2018 appeals were made by the SVP for aid for the people of Kerala, Southern India following devastation of the area by torrential flooding. It resonated within our parish as many of our members had come from Kerala to settle in Bury St Edmunds.

In July 2018 a change in personnel having a responsibility for safeguarding took place with Andrew and Jo Herlihy replacing Rick Shepperson and Celia Gladden who had held this responsibility for four years.

In September 2018 the Church participated in Heritage Open Days with exhibitions provided by members of the History Group highlighting the 'extraordinary women' in our parish history including Susanna Milner Gibson, Elizabeth Rookwood Gage, Lady Miriam Hubbard, Joy Rowe and the Sisters of St Louis. Talks relating to parish history were also given by John Saunders. It was warmly appreciated that Joy Rowe was able to attend and be part of the photograph taken on a Heritage Open Day showing some of the members of the History Group and helpers.





During 1943 and 1945 the American Forces were based at Rougham Airfield. Whilst there, their Chaplain Major Joseph N Collins who was known to all as Fr Joe worked closely with the priests of the parish, Fr Frederick Lockyer and his curate Fr Anthony Throckmorton. In recognition of this special relationship, on his departure from England Fr Joe was presented with a chalice of Spanish/Flemish origin dating back at least to the 1600s together with a paten.

When he died these items passed to his nephew Bill Christie who together with his wife Maryann made the decision to restore them to St Edmund's Church. On 17 September 2018 they visited our Church and presented the chalice and paten which were received by Fr Alvan on behalf of the parish.

On 19 September 2018 the parish said farewell to Fr Alvan as he headed for his new duties in Great Yarmouth. The Church was full of well-wishers at his final Mass; he was someone who had made a huge impact during his relatively short stay, especially engaging with younger people. He was succeeded by Fr Jay Magpuyo who had studied for the priesthood in the Philippines, had been ordained in 2017 and had been serving as assistant at St Laurence's parish in Cambridge. Also resident in the parish at this time were Frs John Warrington, Gerry Quigley, Peter Marsh, Deacon Chris Heath (retired). Although it seemed that the parish was over-staffed, ill-health affected them and their contribution to parish life had to be commensurate.

In October 2018 Brett Gladden was instituted at the Cathedral, Norwich as Acolyte and proved a great asset to the ministry at St Edmund's.

Huge numbers gathered on the Angel Hill, Bury St Edmunds on Sunday 11 November 2018 to observe the Civic open-air service and march past on Remembrance Day. Fr John Warrington represented the Catholic Church within the procession. At all Masses that weekend the names of the war dead (as at Section 'G') were read out. The evening Mass on Sunday concluded with Benediction and the tolling at 7.05 pm of the Church bell, reminiscent of the occasion when 100 years previously the bells had

rung out to proclaim peace. The congregation took part in a dignified procession in which they placed lighted candles in the Sanctuary and offered their own prayers for peace.



Towards the end of 2018 the weekend Masses generated £1423.92 in the collection and £655 and standing orders and £238.10 from Lawshall.

Following the annual civic Mass on 18 November in the presence of the Mayor Margaret Marks, St Edmund's Day was celebrated in the Crypt with ale stew with crusty bread, followed by apple strudel. It was reported that the parish evening dinner on 16 November at the Golf Club had been poorly supported.

The year 2018 had proved particularly testing for Fr Hackeson who had been affected by two close family deaths and coping with changes in personnel at the Presbytery. Midnight Mass 2018 proved a sad occasion when he was stricken with illness during the homily and the service had to be completed by Fr Jay. On 27 January 2019 Fr Hackeson announced that he had offered the Bishop his resignation as our parish priest and that this had been accepted. His farewell Mass was celebrated on 28 February 2019 followed by a gathering in the Crypt. After a break from parish duties and an opportunity to restore his health, he was welcomed later in 2019 to the parish of Our Lady of Pity at Swaffham.

Fr Michael Griffen, a priest in retirement was appointed by the Bishop to assist Fr Jay and Fr John Warrington in parish duties but sadly, within a matter of weeks Fr Michael succumbed to serious ill health and his role in the parish ceased. Fr David Bagstaff of Diss was appointed to oversee the parish and a lengthy period followed during which the ministry of the parish was reliant on Fr John Warrington (who was receiving weekly hospital care), Fr Dick White (retired) and Fr Gerry Quigley) to support Fr Jay and the newly arrived Fr Johane Antonio Nguluwe from St Laurence's, Cambridge. Despite this, the spiritual aspects of the Church were extremely well-provided.

In February 2019 Mrs Imogen Senior became the new head-teacher of St Benedict's School, replacing Kate Pereira.

On Good Friday members of the church joined the procession of witness with friends from other Christian churches in the town and the ecumenical service in the Cathedral at 10.30 am, culminating in coffee and hot cross buns at Garland Street Baptist Church.

On 5 May 2019 St Edmund's Gardening Group held a spring plant sale outside the Church.

A Mass was held on at St Benedict's School on 29 June 2019 to commemorate the contribution of St Louis to education in Bury St Edmunds between 1929 and 2019.

The international Mass was celebrated as usual in June 2019 followed by food in the Crypt. The enrichment provided by having our ethnic minority communities was again evident on the feast of St Thomas when the Indian parishioners attended Mass and provided food afterwards in the Crypt.

The diocesan medal was awarded to Jim Whyte for his long service to the Church.

On 22 June 2019 Brett Gladden was ordained to the Permanent Diaconate and the following day this was recognised at the 10.30 am Mass. Brett stated: *"I am truly overwhelmed by the generosity of people from the parish the many cards and generous gift. As I mentioned at Mass, the community of St Edmund's from the very first time we came as a family through the doors of the Church, has been so wonderful to Celia, the boys and of course me, so fulsome in the welcome I received in becoming a Roman Catholic and attentively sharing and praying with me through my formation and discernment for the Diaconate. The support, the words of encouragement and the sense of love has been so important a part of my journey. I will, I very much hope, continue to share in that love and much needed support in prayer so God who has begun the good work in me brings this to fulfilment and I can serve as one amongst the large body of faithful disciples of Christ of which we are all so much a vital part."*

Alan Hodgson too held a special place in the hearts of many members of the parish who had followed his journey to Holy Orders and travelled with great delight to witness his ordination at St John's Cathedral, Norwich on 6 July 2019 and attended the celebration of his first Mass in St Edmund's Church the following day.

It seemed that the challenging times for the parish had abated with the proclamation of Bishop Alan Hopes: *"I am pleased to announce that Canon David Bagstaff has generously accepted my request that he should be appointed as your new parish priest. He will take up this new appointment as from the weekend 7 to 8 September. Fr Jaylord will continue to work in the parish. I am also delighted to inform you that Deacon Michael Brookes who is being ordained priest on Saturday 6 July has been appointed to the parish. This will make a team of three full-time resident priests. The two permanent deacons of the parish will also work alongside the priests. Canon David Bagstaff will remain as the vicar general for the diocese so he will have commitments outside the parish that he will also need to attend to. I'm grateful to Fr Jaylord and Fr Johane for all that they have done over these past few months to provide sacramental and pastoral needs of the parish, together with those who have helped during this time – Frs John Warrington, Dick White, Gerry Quigley and Jonathan (Great Barton). I am also pleased to tell you that Fr Mark will be taking up a new appointment in the diocese as from September."*



The above picture shows the five priests ordained at St John's Cathedral, Norwich on 6 July 2019.

Fr Mike Brookes (front, 2nd from left) Fr Alan Hodgson (rear far right)

The consequential changes took effect with Fr John Warrington moving to live at Montana whilst still having dialyses at Hospital; Fr Johane Antonio Nguluwe returned to St Laurence's, Cambridge; Fr Alan Hodgson taking up his position as assistant priest at St Mary's, Ipswich.

2019 – 2023 Fr David Bagstaff

The arrival of Fr David Bagstaff and Fr Mike Brookes to join Fr Jay Magpuyo created stability for the parish and a much loved and respected team. On 9 September the service of installation for Fr Bagstaff was held in our Church with a reception in the Crypt afterwards.

Picture with kind permission of the Bury Free Press



The feast of St Lorenzo Ruiz once again provided the Filipino community an opportunity to celebrate and on Sunday 6 October their Mass was made even more special by a tribute from Stephen Dunn, Chief Executive of West Suffolk Hospital to the contribution made by the medical staff from that

community. He also announced that approval had been given for the building of a new hospital for Bury St Edmunds. The feast afterwards in the Crypt raised £155 and was donated to parish funds.

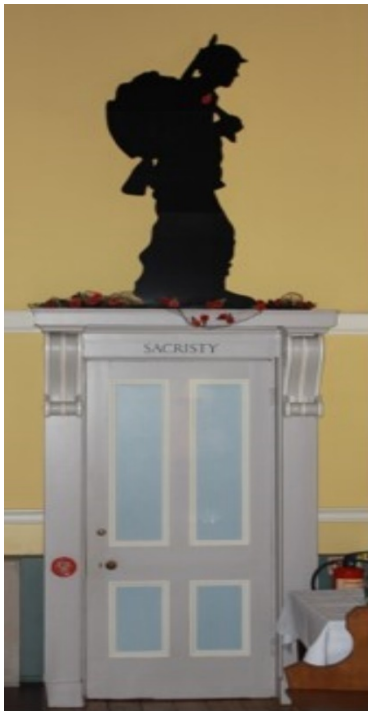


By November 2019 a big 'clear out' had been planned – not more changes to the team of clergy! It was necessary to clear redundant items that had been stored in the Presbytery and the garages within the car park and this was accomplished with due diligence to ensure that items of interest to our history and heritage were preserved. It led to the discovery of two drawers which had been part of the pews in the Church, a redundant processional cross (believed dating back to 1876 when it was purchased for £2 17s 6d), poles used to carry the parish banners and an assortment of items that had hitherto been discarded. Members of the History Group had also embarked on an ambitious project to record all items within the Church, there not being an inventory of its assets. It was hoped that this would lead to a catalogue which could be updated in the future as new items arrived or old ones were removed.



The annual 'Ride and Stride' to raise money for Suffolk Historic Churches suffered a setback when the parish rider Hugh O'Neil was previously injured in an accident. However, a ready replacement was found in Kevin Murphy who successfully completed the event on 14 September 2019.

One of the most moving stories with a happy ending was that of a parishioner, John Franklin. This is more fully described in Section 'I' but, in summary, he was able to celebrate his 100th birthday at 10.30 am Mass on 3 November 2019.



The annual commemoration of Remembrance Day was observed during the weekend of 9 and 10 November 2019. The combined efforts of the History Group and Flower Group brought home the reality of past atrocities. Summaries of the deceased listed in Section 'G' were displayed; the silhouette of a soldier, wreaths and poppies strewn around the Church created a poignant aura and the names of the War Dead were read aloud at Masses.

On 17 November 2019 members of West Suffolk Council, Bury St Edmunds Town Council and Canon Matthew Vernon representing St Edmundsbury Cathedral joined members of the congregation in the civic Mass offered to commemorate the feast of St Edmund. Fr David preached a very pertinent sermon highlighting the life of Edmund as King and Martyr and the founding of St Edmund's Abbey 1,000 years previously. The music was provided by all three Music Groups of the Parish, the flower arrangements beautifully adorned the Church and the ale lunch 'went down a treat'.

Continuing prayers were sought for Fr John Warrington who, after lengthy waiting for a donor kidney, had received surgery at Addenbrookes Hospital on 21 November 2019, the outcome of which appeared a success.

The annual appeal for Gatehouse occurred at the beginning of December. Once again, the congregation provided magnificent support.

A packed Crypt was treated to the Pan-Afro Band concert provided on the 'one-night only' return of Fr Alvan on 30 November 2019. This proved a great success in terms of enjoyment and raising £758 for the Lawshall Church Restoration Fund. The fundraising efforts of this cause were boosted with a further £1,257 from a wine tasting evening in the Crypt.

The Advent and Christmas services were well-attended and showed the degree to which the various parish groups combined. In registering his thanks, Fr David wrote: *'There are always so many people to thank at this time of the year – everyone involved in the journey of Advent as we prepared for the solemnity of Christ's birth. The Church looked beautiful for the Christmas Masses – many thanks to all who clean the Church week in and week out. Thanks to the flower arrangers and those who decorated the Christmas tree. Thanks to all our musicians and singers and altar servers, welcomers, collectors, readers and extraordinary ministers of Communion. Thanks too to everyone involved behind the scenes – those who clean the linen so faithfully. In short, thanks to everyone in the parish for all you do. The clergy would also like to say 'thank you' for your many cards and gifts and your very generous Christmas offering.'*

These words seemed an ideal way of closing this Section as a new decade was about to dawn with the prospect of many events to celebrate a millennium – 1000 years since the Abbey of St Edmund had been founded in our town.

Except that the Section could not close without mention of the Coronavirus which purportedly started in Wuhan, China in December 2019.

Many in the United Kingdom thought that it would not spread to our lands if we took reasonable precautions and maintained our British stoicism and humour. The Government advice of regularly and thoroughly washing hands whilst twice singing 'Happy Birthday' and avoiding such traditions as shaking hands was treated with amusement and a degree of derision. Many parishioners were disinclined to think that this would alter our habits – after all, the traditions of congregating were hardly likely to be curtailed, were they? Parishioners continued to embrace, kiss, remain close to each other, to receive the Sacraments and to exchange the sign of Peace.

As we continued to walk forwards into 2020, Churches Together in Bury St Edmunds launched a week of prayer commencing 19 January with a theme of 'Unusual Kindness'. Our contribution took place on 23 January with lunch time prayers focusing upon the topic 'Keep your strength up'.

By February 2020 Covid-19 had been declared a pandemic. Unprecedented arrangements and rules led to communities in lockdown and revised arrangements for religious services in Italy and Spain. Slowly, the dawning of reality crept in when on Friday 13 February news bulletins announced that the number of confirmed cases in the UK had risen to 798 and the death count had reached 10. An austere warning was issued by the Prime Minister Boris Johnson that many more families 'would lose loved ones before their time'. It was the signal for people to panic and descend on supermarkets to stockpile sometimes without consideration for others. Toilet rolls, pasta, rice and other household items and groceries rapidly disappeared from the shelves. Often, key workers in hospitals found nothing within the stores when they finished their shifts. This less than charitable side of the Nation was counteracted by the many good deeds of our clergy and parishioners.

On Ash Wednesday 11 March 2020 announcements were made at our Masses that no longer would holy water stoups be filled, Holy Communion was to be received by the hands only, consumption from chalices would cease, no longer would the sign of peace occur and priests would rigorously comply in washing hands at intervals during services.

Lenten services and activities for the Parish were planned. These included early Masses and Lent Soup lunches with various parish groups meeting during the week. St Patrick's feast day on 17 March was celebrated with a special Irish Stew lunch. On Wednesday 18th March our Lenten Station Mass was presided over by Bishop Alan Hopes.

Monseigneur John Armitage, the Rector of the Shrine of our Lady of Walsingham requested that the Angelus be said every day at all parish Masses. This was to prepare for the rededication of England as the 'Dowry of Mary' on 29 March.

Rapid escalation of the epidemic resulted in an edict from the Bishops' Conference that with effect from 23 March 2020 all Churches in England should close. The news was received by congregations with great sadness and inevitable alarm that the disease might ultimately spread to the town. That evening, in a televised address, the Prime Minister stated, "I must give the British people a very simple

instruction – you must stay at home.” The only permitted exceptions were shopping for basic necessities as infrequently as possible; one form of exercise per day; any medical need; travelling to and from work but only where this was absolutely necessary and could not be done at home.

Our three priests were governed by this mandate but were joined in the Presbytery by Deacon Peter Wygnański, a seminarian who had returned to this Country from his studies in Rome. He proved a magnificent asset to our community, not least in using his technical skills to set up live streaming of daily Mass from the Chapel, providing a vital link to those who could view. Sunday mornings attracted around 250 people logging on to the You Tube site which was a high number when considering that this number was representative of households rather than individuals. This number would invariably increase to 450 throughout the day, akin to the normal overall physical attendance of around 650 at Mass. Bishop Alan reminded us that if we did not feel able to receive Holy Communion in the hand then we should make a good and sincere act of spiritual communion through prayer.

Our ‘Helping Hands’ group continued to offer practical support wherever possible.

Events planned as ‘Abbey 1000’ to celebrate the millennium of the founding of our Abbey were put on hold. Other local, national and international events were similarly suspended. John Saunders highlighted in written articles on the Church website and an interview through Radio Suffolk the significance of St Edmund at times of historic plaque, his patronage having been sought by the residents of Toulouse in the 17th century and the belief that his intercession had quelled an outbreak of smallpox in Bury St Edmunds in 1902 (see Section ‘E’).



Our Church reopened on 15 June for those wishing to visit for private prayer. For the 25 parishioners who visited during the course of the morning it was very meaningful to them and they all understood the need for the constraints that were in force. Sanitiser and instructions on arrival at the main entrance to the porch, only the rear of the Church in front of the Lady Altar was accessible with 5 pews being available with the requirement of 2 metres distancing, exit being via the ramp. Afterwards the pews and contact surfaces had to be sprayed and wiped by the volunteer stewards.



The events of the spring and summer of 2020 had world-changing effects which would be etched in history. By the beginning of July the number of confirmed cases Worldwide stood at 11.8 million and the number of deaths at 544,000. Within the UK the figures were 286,000 confirmed cases and 44,391 deaths but the daily numbers (with the exception of Leicester) had decreased to the extent that lockdown was eased and public worship was once again permitted. On Saturday 4 July, at 6 pm Mass was celebrated within our Church with around 60 people attending and greeting Fr David's welcome with a round of applause. The social distance of 1.5 metres and the wearing of face masks made for a somewhat strange atmosphere but there was great appreciation at being able to reassemble as a community and receive Holy Communion. Similar numbers appeared at the Masses the following day. During that weekend 18 of the 19 parishes across Suffolk reopened for Mass, the exception being Stowmarket where Government and Church guidelines could not be fully met.

It was not until the 4 and 5 July 2020 that St Edmund's Church was able to reopen for Mass, although with a limitation on numbers attending, use of face masks and adherence with social distancing guidelines.

Fr Dick White celebrated 30 years as a Priest in our Diocese with a thanksgiving Mass on 14 July here in the Church in which he was ordained. Further good news followed as we learnt of the planned ordination of Deacon Peter Wagnanski on 25 July in the Cathedral of St John the Baptist, Norwich. We said a fond goodbye to Fr Peter in early August with thanks for his help and support during the Covid lockdown.

The beginning of September saw the reopening of schools. The annual Suffolk Historic Churches Trust Ride and Stride was also able to take place albeit with limited support as per Covid guidelines.

However, Covid continued to be a threat and we entered the second lockdown of the year. Once again, we were again unable to open the Church for public services. The feast of St Edmund on 20 November was celebrated 'online'.

As we began the season of Advent lockdown restrictions were eased and we were able to return to public Masses but with the booking system in place once again and limits on the number of people in the Church. Christmas parish activities adapted to meet the restrictions in place and many virtual gatherings were organised. The annual Parish Community Carol service was held over Zoom. Despite the many challenges the Church looked beautiful for the Christmas services, the tree was decorated and the crib installed.

Covid-19 had prevented many organisations from gathering and the Church History Group was one of these casualties. However, this was rectified on 17 April 2023 when 16 members decided to continue its work and Jean Heaslip volunteered to assist the research of Church events for inclusion in the chronicle. The product of her efforts covering the remainder of 2020 and onwards would ensure that the recording of our history would be maintained.

As 2021 dawned the Parish was still adhering to Covid restrictions and sadly as a result, it was not possible to celebrate Mass at Lawshall. Our Diocesan Bishop Alan Hopes offered his resignation to Pope Francis and the process began to appoint a successor. Information Technology and Zoom played an ever-helpful role enabling the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity to take place remotely in the middle of January.

Lent began on 17 February with the booking system for all Masses still in place and live streaming of services still a fundamental part of Parish life. Bishop Alan celebrated the Deanery Station Mass in the Church on 9 March. Places for Holy Week and Easter Sunday were limited as there were only single services for the various liturgies. Joyfully however, Easter Sunday Mass was celebrated at Lawshall. Pope Francis decreed 2021 as a special Year of St Joseph and also to be celebrated as a Year of the Family.

Continuing to adhere to Covid restrictions, the Diocesan pilgrimage to Walsingham was live-streamed on 3 May. As we approached the end of May however, we saw an easing of lockdown restrictions. This enabled distribution of the Eucharist at Mass, a resumption of Altar Server duties and an increase in permitted numbers attending weddings and funerals.

On the Most Holy Trinity Sunday on 30 May a national Rosary Relay rally took place across the various Dioceses of the British Isles. As part of the East Anglian Diocese our relay hour began at 2 pm.

Regular Lawshall Sunday Mass resumed on 6 June, the feast of Corpus Christi, but with a booking system in place.

Bishop Alan visited the Parish on 14 June to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation with 21 young people and 2 adults. He returned to the Parish on 18 July to Confirm those who had previously been in Covid isolation.

July saw a further easing of Covid restrictions especially the move to no-longer mandated wearing of face coverings at Mass and the gradual reintroduction of singing at services.

On Sunday 8 August members of the Parish participated in a Churches Together summer picnic celebration in the Abbey gardens. With music and singing from different Church communities it was a lovely way to demonstrate that which we have in common. John Saunders was welcomed onto the stage as a guest speaker, representing our Church.

Parish life continued to build throughout the month of September as we got closer to our definition of normality without the constraints of Covid. A successful and enjoyable Parish barbeque was organised at Lawshall. Fr Jay established a weekly Chess and Table tennis Club. A new Journey in Faith group began and the Parish AGM took place. Other group meetings and Parish activities continued to build momentum. From the middle of September it was no longer necessary to book a place at Mass. We were able to resume special language Masses in Polish and Malayalam.

A significant event in the life of the Parish took place on 4 September with a farewell Mass and celebration for Fr Mike Brookes. After a two year stay in the Parish, he was appointed Parish Administrator in St Edmund's, Bungay. Over this final weekend with us, he celebrated all the Masses in the Church. We were very saddened to see him leave us.

Willing parishioners participated in the annual Suffolk Historic Churches Trust Ride and Stride on 11 September with half of the money raised returned for our own Church. On 26th September Parish children celebrated the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Fr Antony Arockiam arrived as an addition to our Parish on 29 September.

As we moved into October 2021 various social activities were evident across the Parish. Memories of the challenges imposed by the Covid restrictions spawned an enthusiasm for new projects and the re-establishment of old. Garden volunteers were again able to get to work, a Mother and Toddler group was meeting weekly and in support of Churches Together in Bury St Edmunds and District we exchanged 'Christian Greetings' in the Cathedral on 3 October.

On Sunday 17 October, in conjunction with every Parish throughout the Catholic Church we marked the beginning of the Synodal Journey. This in preparation for the Rome Synodal Pathway to be held in 2023. Parishes were asked to complete and compile answers to ten survey questions around welcoming, listening, communication, liturgy, participation, engagement, relationships, teamwork, the Holy Spirit and the sharing of our faith. This particular Sunday, and the next, also marked First Communion Sunday postponed from June.

In the beginning of November, in preparation for the 2023 Synod in Rome, prayer cards were printed and questions for each individual to consider were posted on the Parish website. Remembrance Services were again commemorated at Masses on 13 and 14 November 2021, the names of those killed in conflict were read out and two minutes' silence observed.

On Saturday 20 November we celebrated the Feast of St Edmund with a Civic Mass followed by lunch in the crypt. Although this did not attract a large congregation, those who did attend enjoyed the occasion. This weekend the Parish welcomed an icon of St Joseph, which had been travelling around the various Parishes of the Diocese, to display in the Church for one week. Also on 20 November, World Youth Day East Anglia was celebrated at the Cathedral of St John the Baptist Norwich with special music, talks and Mass. We were delighted that eight of our students from St Benedict's School were able to attend.

Advent commenced on 28 November and during its first three Sundays we were grateful to Fr Dick White for saying Mass at Lawshall. In line with Covid guidelines we saw the return of mandated face coverings at Mass from 5 December. Sadly, a planned Christingle family gathering that afternoon had to be cancelled. At weekend Masses we had guidance from RoseMarie and Richard Counihan about the completion of our input to the Synodal Pathway survey.

To celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate Conception a light lunch was organised following 10 am Mass.

Although Covid restrictions remained in place the Parish celebrated a wonderful Christmas with Masses in St Edmund's and Lawshall, each venue being beautifully decorated.

The year 2022 gave the impression that the Country was slowly returning to some form of normality although at its beginning restrictions imposed by Covid remained in place. Nevertheless, special language Masses in Polish and Malayalam continued to be scheduled. Our St Edmund's candle, from our German twin parish of Kevelaer, was blessed at Mass in their Basilica on 11 January.

The week of Christian Unity began with an evening service in the Church on 16 January with family and friends welcomed from other Christian Churches in the town. The Parish also hosted one of the Christian Unity lunchtime Prayer sessions on the 20 January. We received the news that Fr Antony was moving from the Parish at the end of the month after only a short four months stay with us. During this period he was the acting Catholic Chaplain at West Suffolk Hospital. Although very saddened to see him leave we were delighted to hear that he had been appointed Parish Priest to St Joseph's Parish in St Neots.

As February dawned, we welcomed Fr Walter Chenyika to the Parish.

During the month concentrated effort was placed on the submission and discussion of individual responses to the Synodal Pathway questionnaire. Multiple open meetings were held so that as many responses and views as possible could be collected from parishioners before submission to the Diocese.

With further easing of Covid restrictions February also saw the resumption of Abbey 1000 activities. Towards raising £1,000 for charities, John Saunders arranged a public talk and guided town tour about St Edmund. Fr David was installed as Ecumenical Canon of St Edmundsbury Cathedral on Sunday 13 February.

Raffle tickets went on sale at both St Edmund's and Lawshall to raise funds for our twin parish in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

Ash Wednesday fell on 2 March and to mark our Parish journey through Lent the Children's Liturgy team prepared activities and prayers for families to share. Weekly printed versions of prayers and activities were available after Mass and posted on the Parish website. A thought-provoking leaflet was produced and distributed with ideas for the different ways in which the Lenten journey could be made. Not only about the traditional manner of giving things up but suggesting other ways in which Lent 2022 could become special for each individual.

Each week in Lent was also designated for specific collectable items for the Storehouse charity which we continued to support throughout the year. During Lent there were social and liturgical opportunities for reflection and discussion. The Lenten Alms collected was divided between the St Francis Leprosy Guild, Aid to the Church in Need and the Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal. We held a sale for Fairtrade on 3 April and at intervals throughout the year.

The second week of March saw the urgent departure of Fr Jay to East Dereham as temporary cover for their Parish Priest who had fallen ill. In October Fr Jay was appointed as their Parish Priest.

Fr Peter Marsh's 60th anniversary of his Ordination was celebrated on 20 March at Lawshall with Mass followed by lunch.

On the weekend of 26/27 March, the parish welcomed the Missionary Sisters of St Peter Claver. The Sisters came to tell us about their work and to ask for our financial support. They are members of the Sister's Mission Committee which is an umbrella organisation for the Missionary Sisters based in England and Wales. That same week, on 31 March, Bishop Alan came to St Edmund's for the Bury Deanery Lenten Station Mass. Before Mass at 6pm there was the opportunity for Confession with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. This was followed socially with the provision of soup and chat in the crypt.

During the fifth week of Lent, on 6 April, a day of talks and discussions were held to explore how the town of Bury St Edmunds would be affected if it again became a popular place of pilgrimage. That evening Lawshall held a Taize evening with Lenten reflections and music followed by refreshments.

Good Friday was once again celebrated with our participation in the annual joint churches Walk of Witness. Commencing in the Cathedral with a short service, a procession followed that moved up Angel Hill and into the town's Market Square for hymns and readings.

We were blessed with a truly celebratory Easter Triduum culminating in a wonderful Easter Sunday with the Church looking magnificent.

At 10.30 am Mass on 24 April we were pleased to host the Catenians of East Anglia for their President's day. The Catenians are an association of Catholic men who are committed to faith, family and friendship meeting once a month. On 25 April the celebration of Monday Mass resumed at West Suffolk Hospital. The following day saw the start of a six-weekly course in the Crypt to explore the Holy Spirit. Fr Walter led an Exploring Faith Group on a monthly basis throughout the year.

On Saturday 27 May, in conjunction with Churches Together, an introductory workshop was held in the Crypt to explore the ancient form of prayer known as Centering Prayer. Two practitioners from Contemplative Outreach ran the informative and enjoyable workshop.

After a two-year delay caused by Covid we were finally able to celebrate the founding of the Abbey of St Edmund during the weekend 14/15 May 2022. On the Sunday morning St Edmund's Church closed its doors and members of our congregation went to St Edmundsbury Cathedral at 9.15 am for Mass celebrated by Bishop Alan but with a sermon given by the Anglian Bishop Martin Seeley. These roles were reversed in the Anglian service that followed. On the Sunday afternoon we were invited to attend Vespers followed by a procession to the Abbey ruins to listen to Abbot Geoffrey from Douai Abbey, Berkshire.

Pentecost Sunday on 5 June saw the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holydays re-established after the long break as a result of Covid restrictions. This Sunday also saw a parish barbeque, held in the Presbytery garden, to celebrate both the Feast of Pentecost and the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. The month of June also saw some of our young people celebrating the Sacraments of First Holy Communion and for others their Confirmation.

Although retired, Fr Dick White joined us at the end of June to help the clergy out with Masses, weddings and baptisms. He returned to the Parish again in the middle of November.

As part of Abbey 1000, at the Picnic in the Park celebration on 16 July, with a target of £1,000 raised for good causes, we ran a stall selling home-made cakes. The Ladies Club, heavily supported by the Polish contingent, baked and organised items for sale. Plants were also available and combined with other financial support, the target was exceeded and £1,200 raised which was divided between Gatehouse, St Nicholas Hospice and the Church.

East Anglian clergy moves in August did not affect the Parish directly but we did say goodbye that month to Sr Marie O'Reilly of the St Louis Order, with a thanksgiving service and a celebration afterwards in the Crypt on 14 August. Fr David paid tribute to her enormous contribution to our parish community during her 23-year service with us. Her departure meant that no Sisters of St Louis remained in the town.

Abbey 1000 events continued throughout August with a talk on St Edmund, given by John Saunders, in the crypt. The alms box from the Church and a medallion of St Edmund belonging to a parishioner were also exhibited in the Abbey exhibition held in Moyses's Hall.

At the beginning of September we welcomed Fr Kevin Hughes from the Mill Hill Missionaries to preach at all Masses and to give the five-yearly Red Box appeal. The money given through the Red Box goes to support the Pope's charity for missions, Missio, and the Mill Hill Missions. This month some of our young parishioners commenced their planning and fundraising for World Youth Day 2023 with a sponsored walk around 10 churches. Further fundraising took place in November with a return sponsored walk from the Church to Claire Priory.

On Sunday 11 September the 8.30am Mass was offered for the repose of the soul of HM Queen Elizabeth II who had died three days earlier.

This month the parish again participated in the annual Suffolk Historic Churches Trust Ride and Stride event. We also recorded and welcomed 56 participants from other churches to our own. The parish AGM took place on Sunday 18 September. To continue to support our twinned parish of Siem Reap, Cambodia, a family games night was held on 24 September.

As we entered the month of October the 10.30 am Mass was celebrated with a Season of Creation theme in line with the call from Pope Francis for actions to care for our natural world. Pope Francis also appointed Canon Peter Collins from Cardiff as the new bishop for our diocese of East Anglia.

A Polish Evening took place in the Crypt on 8 October. World Mission Sunday was celebrated on 23 October. Fr Jay returned to the parish for his farewell Mass and thanksgiving celebration on Saturday 29 October. Finally, as October drew to a close a Night of Light family fun evening was held in the Crypt to celebrate Halloween.

The church was beautifully decorated with poppies and display boards incorporating the details of those who had died in the World Wars, including that of Karel Valach whose remains had been recovered by Dutch authorities 81 years after the bomber in which and other crew members crashed in Holland. Also included was the story of John Franklin (see Section 'J') who had escaped the atrocities of World War II and been dispossessed, a situation now familiar with the people of Ukraine who were victims of Russian oppression. The Chalice and Paten used at all Masses were those that had been gifted to an American Forces Chaplin as earlier described in Section 'G' .

The Patronal Solemnity of St Edmund King and Martyr took place on Saturday 19 November at 11 am and was attended by Clare Countess of Euston as the County's Lord Lieutenant, Lord Bristol, civic representatives, Church leaders and a sizeable congregation. It proved to be an event that showed the devotion to St Edmund and involved many parish groups in its organisation. The service booklet featured a striking picture of the Church drawn by Agnieszka Procajlo, a local and talented artist and set out the order of service that featured a strong input from our choir. Every effort had been made to highlight the attractiveness of the Church with its cleanliness and floral arrangements. Adjourning after Mass to the Crypt for the sumptuous Edmund Ale Stew, attendees were able to view other paintings by Agnieszka, the carving by local sculptor Clint Rose of a welcome sign featuring the wolf and head of St Edmund and a mini-exhibition of artefacts relating to St Edmund. The event received great praise from Catholics and non-Catholics alike and revealed the community bonds that existed. The Civic Mass represented the closure of Abbey 1000 events.

We entered the season of Advent on 27 November with planning for Christmas activities well underway. These included an informal family social with contemporary music and the more traditional carols in the crypt, all with refreshments included. The Lawshall Quiz Night, raising restoration funds, also returned on 3 December. Further charitable activities included collecting blankets for Ukraine, providing Christmas cards for Cambodia and the annual appeal for Gatehouse were also undertaken. The raising of funds to purchase a tractor for our twin parish in Cambodia was another parish activity. The Montana Care Home hosted a Curry supper on 10 December.

A special Holy Hour was designated on 11 December across the Diocese to pray for Bishop Peter. His Episcopal Ordination took place on 14 December 2022 in St John's Cathedral, Norwich.

The Church during Advent resonated with wonderful Christmas music and carols from the performances by St Benedict's School Carol Service and the Community Choir Carol Concert. Families were invited to decorate the Christmas tree and children dressed up as angels and shepherds for the Christmas Eve family Mass.

At the beginning of 2023 as messages of thanks went out to the parish for all the work that took place behind the scenes at Christmas, the pressures upon the clergy were also recognised as they ministered at St Edmund's and Lawshall and Fr David continued his duties as Vicar General for the Diocese. Services at Montana and those at St Edmund's in Polish and Malayalam continued to be offered. As ever, Fr Dick White, assisted during his retirement by providing cover during absences.

Mid-January, the parish hosted daily lunch time prayers as part of the week of prayer for Christian Unity. On 20 January, the parish celebrated the first of a series of four Masses for the Holy Innocents. This was in support of the Prayer Pledge that had been launched by the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC).

On 28 January, the parish launched a three-week reflection asking each parishioner to consider how they were using the various individual talents given to them by God and to take some resultant action. Using the theme of Stewardship parishioners were asked to consider their use of the three topics of Time, Talents and Treasure. Supporting newsletters were distributed and members of the parish spoke after Masses about the different topics and described ways in which parishioners could become involved in parish life. The third and final weekend was designated as Commitment Weekend to enable each individual to move from consideration into practical action. One illustrative outcome of the reflection was the creation of a Bible Study Group.

On 8 February we welcomed Fr Anil Zachery to the clergy team.

Lent commenced on 22nd February with an invitation to participate in various services including early morning Masses, Friday hunger lunches and a parish retreat day on 1 March. On 14 March we received the first visit Bishop Peter to the parish to celebrate the Deanery Station Mass. This was followed by a social gathering in the crypt.

Two practical examples demonstrated parish humanity during Lent. In mid-March Chris Turner, in conjunction with CAFOD, organised a group to undertake a 20-mile coastal walk raising funds for the victims of the devastating earthquake in Turkey. On 18 March the Octave Vocal Ensemble presented Music for Meditation in the church with donations for the United Nations Refugee Agency, UNHCR, in Ukraine.

Holy Week saw a full schedule of services. Parishioners also joined other church congregations and took part in the town's Good Friday Walk of Witness on 7 April. Once again messages of thanks went out to all those parishioners who had been involved in making Lent and the Easter celebrations such a success.

A classical music fundraising afternoon took place on 21 April in support of the Youth Group trip to World Youth Day in Portugal and also for the provision of church benches for Fr Walter's church in Zimbabwe. More musical entertainment was arranged on 23 April in support of the Lawshall refurbishment. In St Edmund's a celebration for St Wojciech, patron saint of Poland, was also held that same day at 10.30 am Mass where we welcomed Fr Pawel as celebrant.

At the beginning of May, Bishop Peter met with the various diocesan Cambodia twinning groups. Five members of our Parish participated in the meeting.

The poignant funeral of 100-year-old Joe Cattini was held in the Church on 19 May. Joe was one of the last remaining D-Day veterans who had served with the Royal Artillery. To acknowledge his military service the coffin was draped with the Regiment standard and five eulogies conveyed the manner in which he had conducted his life with faith and courage. The congregation included members of various veteran groups as well as serving members of the Royal Artillery.

On 28 May 28 and after a period of 4 years, the Parish celebrated a special International Mass. Two dozen flags from different nations were carried into the church with many of the flag bearers, as well as members of the congregation, dressed in their national costumes. The service was celebrated by Fr Anil with Fr David as concelebrant and the international theme continued with bidding prayers given in different languages. The Choir also provided music and hymns from around the world. Following

the service, a celebration lunch (see photographs at Section 'I') took place in the crypt with parishioners providing a selection of food from the different countries for people to share.

The remaining Covid restriction was lifted with the return of Communion from the Chalice on the Feast of Corpus Christi on 11 June. A First Communion Mass took place during the afternoon.

On Tuesday 20 June Bishop Peter visited the parish to celebrate our Confirmation Mass followed by a celebration in the crypt.

On 6 July Fr Anil and Phyllis McGann arranged to show the Pope's documentary film 'The Letter' in the crypt to encourage discussion and resultant action. This film has been produced in support of the actual letter which the Pope has written discussing climate change and its impact on our environment.

The middle of July saw wonderful examples of our broader Parish community coming together. In support of the Lawshall building fund, 'The Tease' was organised by John Saunders. This took place on 16 July and involved 25 teams of 6 people working together on a trail around Bury St Edmunds to learn more about the town. Attracting a diverse range of people, including those from neighbouring Counties and many non-Catholics, it proved an enjoyable occasion, enriched by a strawberry tea served by Sarah Farr and a team of parishioners. Over 200 people attended the event which, with the addition of a raffle and sponsorship, raised £3,000.



The following weekend parishioners gathered together over a successful Parish barbeque.

On 5 September we celebrated a Mass of thanksgiving for the prison ministry of Deacon Alan McMahon.

The annual Suffolk Historic Churches sponsored Ride and Stride took place on 9 September and once again Hugh O'Neill and several parishioners rode their bicycles around our local churches. A team of welcome volunteers greeted more than 50 visitors who were able to view and find out more about our own church. The following day a concert was held in the crypt given by the Churchgate Wind Octet fundraising for the Lawshall restoration. Another fundraising example took place on 20 August at the Lawshall barbeque.

On 18 September, the parish gathered together to bid farewell to Fr David and Fr Walter with a Mass and farewell gathering in the crypt. Both moved to their new parishes that week, Fr David to Aldeburgh and Fr Walter to St George's, Norwich.

2023 Fr Sean Connolly

On 20 September 2023 Fr Sean arrived to replace Fr David as priest in charge with Fr Mark Ashwood moving in the following day in place of Fr Walter.

The first weekend in October saw the annual harvest collection in support of CAFOD and the provision of mobile medical clinics in Pakistan. These were all the more urgent following the devastating floods in 2022.

During the weekend of 29/30 October parishioner activities and actions that had taken place since the launch of Time, Talents and Treasure were revisited.

To celebrate the eve of All Saints a Night of Lights was successfully held for young children and their families.

On Remembrance Sunday, 12th November, the Church was poignantly decorated with poppies and interpretation panels. The names of those parishioners who served in our armed forces and lost their lives in war were individually remembered at each Mass and at Lawshall.



St Edmund's Day Civic Mass took place on 18 November. The parish welcomed visitors from the local churches, ecumenical groups and civic dignitaries to the service followed by a traditional lunch of Edmund ale stew, organised in the Crypt by a team headed by Maree Reilly of Edmund ale stew.

The privilege of having three priests in our parish was curtailed at the beginning of Advent with the move of Fr Anil was to the Church of Our Lady and the English Martyrs at Cambridge. A farewell Mass was celebrated by him on 18 December followed by a good turnout of well-wishers in the Crypt.

Moving closer to Christmas week many opportunities were presented, both in our own church and locally, to join in the singing of traditional Carols. Times of Christmas Masses were altered following consultation with parishioners resulting in good attendance.

Much had happened by the end of 2023. We had enjoyed the Country's celebrations in May to mark the coronation of King Charles III which for many had given some respite to feelings of political and economic gloom. Internationally the conflict between Russia and Ukraine was unrelenting and pockets of unrest prevailed in other parts of the World. The scale of disruption in our parish was therefore minor within this context of and we continued to be driven by our faith and the direction given by Fr Sean and Fr Mark.