SAINT EDMUND'S BURY: THE ABBEY CHURCH AND MONASTERY

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649306787

Saint Edmund's Bury: the abbey church and monastery by Edward M. Dewing

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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Saint Edmund's Bury.

THE ABBEY CHURCH

AND

MONASTERY.

BY EDWARD M. DEWING, M.A.

SOLD FOR THE BENEFIT OF

The Abbot Anselm Institute.

BURY ST. EDMUND'S:
PUBLISHED BY FREDERICK T. GROOM,
ABBEYGATE STREET.
1886.

EXPLANATION OF THE PLATE.

1. Ancient Church of St. Mary.
2. The old Church of St. Edmund, afterwards the Lady Chapel.
3. Chapel of St. Dionysius or St. Denis.
4. Chapel of St. Stephen. ?
5. Chapel of St. Andrew 1120—48.
6. Chapel of St. Margaret 1120—48.
7. Chapel of the Charnel 1301.
8. Chapel of St. John ad Montem. ?
9. Chapel of St. Stephen and St. Edmund, *capella prioris in cimiterio* 1257—79.
10. South gate of Cemetery.
11. Great gate of Cemetery and bell tower of St. James' Church.
12. Gate leading to great court of Monastery.
13. The Mint.
15. Cellarer's stores, servants' dormitory over.
16. Kitchen. ?
17. ?
18. Refectory.
19. Great Cloister.
20. The Chapter House.
21. Monks' parlour, dormitory over.
22. Abbot's palace and offices.
23. do. do.
24. do. do.
25. do. do.
26. do. do.
27. Range of offices, stables etc.
28. Infirmary with Bradfield Hall adjoining.
29. Hospices of Prior and Sacrist.
30. Hexagonal turret.
31. The North gate of Monastery. Abbot's private gate.
32. The Bridge and East gate of Town.

PREFACE.

THE following paper was first read on the occasion of a visit of the members of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society to Bury St. Edmund's on July 21st, 1885. It was again read at the request of the Rev. Canon Harrison before a meeting of his parishioners and friends upon St. James' Day. On both occasions the meetings were held within the ruined transept of the Abbey Church under the shadow of the north eastern pier of the central tower.

The Architectural History of the Abbey has been ably illustrated by Mr. Gordon Hills in two articles which appeared in the twenty-first volume of the British Archæological Association. The writer of the following paper has made free use of these articles, and he fully acknowledges the debt.

The paper is now printed, and is to be sold for the benefit of the Institute, which named after Abbot Anselm has been lately established in the parish of St. James.

But again a debt must be acknowledged. This paper would not have appeared in its present form but for the suggestion of Mr. Algernon B. Bevan who kindly undertook to print it at his private press, for which the writer tenders him his best thanks.

ST. EDMUND'S BURY,

THE ABBEY CHURCH.

ACCORDING to Bede, the province of East Anglia first received the faith of Christ when Eorpwald, the son of Redwald the Bretwalda, was King of East Anglia. Eorpwald was led to embrace the faith through Edwin King of Northumbria who had been baptised by Paulinus in the year 627. Not long after his conversion Eorpwald was slain by a pagan and the East Anglian crown came into possession of Sigebert, his half brother, "a most christian and learned man," who had lived in France during his brother's life.

Sigebert, recalled to reign over East Anglia, brought with him Felix, a Burgundian priest, with whom he had lived on terms of great intimacy. By the help of Felix, who became the first East Anglian Bishop, and had his seat at Dunwich the King set up schools in imitation of the institutions he had seen in France, built churches and persuaded his subjects to embrace the Christian faith.

Sigebert did not long rule over East Anglia, but "being so great a lover of the heavenly kingdom," he about the year 633 resigned the crown to his cousin Ecgric, and retired to a monastery which he is said to have built at this place then called Bedericsworth or Betricheswerde and later Beodrici Villa.

No account of Sigebert's monastery has come down to us, but that in some sort it continued to exist, is clear from the statement that the relics of King Edmund were removed hither "as to a place of note" from the small wooden chapel at Hoxne in which the King's body had been laid after the murder. Here was constructed for the uncorrupted body a large church of planked wood, and here it remained until the year 1010 when through fear of the Danes it was removed to London, where a church in Lombard Street dedicated to his honour still exists.

In Asser's life of Alfred, it is recorded that "In the year of Our Lord's incarnation 855, Edmund the most glorious King of the East Angles began to reign in the fourteenth year of his age."

The Anglo Saxon Chronicle under the year 870 states that the Danes took up their winter quarters at Thetford; and that "in the same winter King Edmund fought against them, and the Danes got the victory."

Edmund fled to Hoxne where he fell into the hands of the victors, who offered him his life on condition of renouncing the Christian faith. Refusing to do this, the King was bound to a tree "beaten with clubs and shot at with arrows." Tradition long pointed out "St. Edmund's Oak" in