



# The Abbey of St Edmund

## THE ABBEY AND THE CROWN

### Why was this relationship so important?

The Crown played a key role in the history of the abbey. In fact the abbey was founded by a king, made famous by a king and finally destroyed by a king.

It owed much of its wealth and power to the various monarchs who visited the abbey throughout its history. As well as leaving generous gifts at the shrine of St Edmund some also granted special privileges to the abbey. The abbot was a political power. He was often present at court, sometimes as advisor and sometimes in dispute with the king. He also provided hospitality for royal visits which could be very expensive.

### ACTIVITY

Below are several monarchs who played their part in shaping the history of the abbey. Which do you think had the most influence?

#### Sigebert, King of the East Angles

Sigebert founded the abbey in about 633. The original building was made of wood.

#### Edmund

The abbey owed its fame and fortune originally to the Legend of St Edmund. The magnificent shrine which held the body of the saint was the most important centre of pilgrimage in England during the 11th and 12th centuries.

A great deal of the abbey's wealth at that time came from gifts left by the stream of pilgrims who visited the abbey church. Much of this money was put into the building works which increased the size of the church and the abbey precinct. By the 13th century the Abbey of St Edmund was one of the five largest in England.

#### Edward the Confessor

The abbey continued to have important royal connections. When Edward the Confessor visited the abbey in 1041 he gave the abbot powers of jurisdiction (law and order) and administration over most of West Suffolk. In this area known as the 'Liberty of St Edmund' the abbot acted as the king's representative. As a result he was one of the country's most powerful barons. Through his court the abbot held the power of life and death, fine or imprisonment over all the inhabitants of the Liberty, whether they lived on abbey lands or not.

In a small area his powers were absolute and even the king gave way to the abbot's ruling.

Edward the Confessor also allowed the monks to run a mint in the town. This was a special privilege.

#### William the Conqueror

After the Norman invasion, William the Conqueror made his physician (doctor) Baldwin abbot of the Abbey of St Edmund. As Baldwin was a Frenchman loyal to William, the king secured from the Pope the abbey's freedom from episcopal control. This meant that the abbey would not be visited by other bishops or abbots with disciplinary power. This gave the abbot more control and made him answerable only to the king and to the Pope in Rome.

#### Henry III

Henry III granted a charter to the Abbey of St Edmund in 1272 for a fair to be held annually on Angel Hill near the Abbey Gate. This was primarily a trade fair and brought a lot of money in to the abbey. The fair ran annually for 600 years.

#### Henry VIII

Henry VIII ordered the closure of the abbey, as part of the 'dissolution' of all the monasteries in the country in 1539. His sister, Mary Tudor, was buried in the abbey. Her body was later moved to St Mary's Church where it still lies today.



Henry VIII

## Royal visits to the abbey recorded in the abbey registers are:

King Canute, 1032

Edward the Confessor, 1045

William the Conqueror

Henry I, 1132

Henry II, 1174

Richard I, 1189 – Abbot Samson raised money for the ransom of Richard in 1193

John, 1203, 1214

Henry III, 1251, 1272

Edward I, 1289, 1296

Queen Eleanor, 1289

Edward II, 1326

Edward III

Richard II, 1383

Henry VI, 1433, 1436, 1446, 1448 – Parliament was held in Bury St Edmunds in 1446-7.

Edward VI, 1469

Henry VII, 1486

Mary Tudor, Queen of France, 1553

## THE 'CHRONICLES OF JOCELIN'

### A dispute with the king 1198

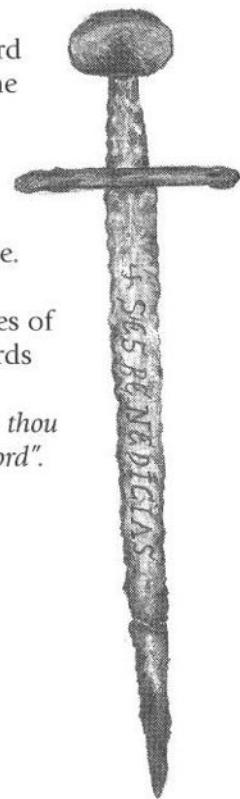
When Adam of Cockfield died (probably 1198) he left a daughter of three months as his heiress, and the abbot gave the wardship of her fee as he chose. King Richard, however, petitioned by some of those close to him, caused trouble by seeking the wardship and the girl for one of his courtiers, persistently sending both letters and messengers to this end. But the abbot answered that he had given the wardship and confirmed it in a charter, and sending a messenger to the king, he tried by entreaty and gift to appease the king's anger, if that was at all possible. In great indignation, the king replied that he would get his own back on this proud abbot who went against his wishes, but he held back out of reverence and fear of St Edmund. Thus when the messenger returned, the abbot shrewdly ignored the king's threats, saying, 'If he wishes, the king may send and take the ward. He has the strength and power to effect his will and take away the whole abbacy. I will never bend and do what he wishes, nor will I ever authorize it, for fear that the consequences of such an action would be to the disadvantage of my successors. I will never pay money to the king in this business. The Almighty shall see to it. Whatever happens, I shall endure it patiently.' Just when many were saying and thinking that the king was hostile towards the abbot, most surprisingly the king wrote in friendly fashion to the abbot requesting that he should give him some of his hunting dogs. The abbot, mindful of the judicious saying, 'Bribes, believe me, win both gods and men, and Jupiter himself is appeased by the offering of gifts' (Ovid, *Ars Amat.* iii. 653-4), sent dogs as the king had requested, and also horses and other valuable gifts. The king accepted these gratefully, and publicly before his earls and barons commended the abbot's probity and staunchness. (Between February 1198 and April 1199,) as a token of his friendship and affection, he sent messengers to the abbot with a precious ring which Pope Innocent III, out of his great charity, had given him, and which was the first gift made to the king after the pope's consecration (22 February 1198); and he wrote warmly thanking the abbot for the many gifts he had received.

From *Jocelin of Brakelond: Chronicle of the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds*

## ARTEFACTS

### Sword

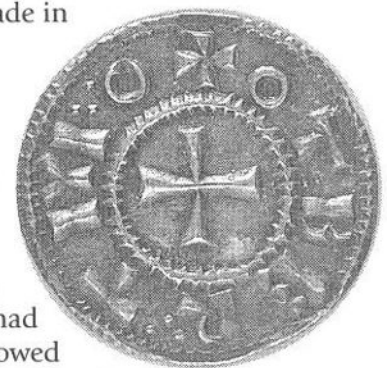
This late 12th century sword was found on the site of the Battle of Fornham (1173). Forces loyal to King Henry II defeated the rebels led by the Earl of Leicester in a decisive battle. Inlaid silver letters (some upside down) on both sides of the blade spell out the words "SES BENEDICTUS IN NOMINE DOMINI" – "be thou blessed in the name of the Lord".



### St Edmund Memorial Penny

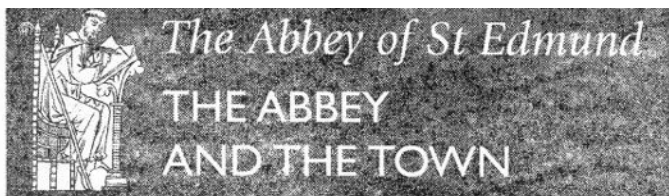
In England, the standard coin was the silver penny. It was used from late Saxon times right through the Middle Ages.

At first, coins were made in a large number of regional mints to supply local needs. Gradually the number of mints was reduced until there were only a few outside London. The abbot of St Edmund had a 'Privilege' which allowed him to strike coinage at Bury St Edmunds. The mint was inside the abbey walls. It was looted during an uprising in 1327 and seems never to have struck again.



# T I M E L I N E

635	The King of East Anglia set up a royal shrine at the abbey
870	The Danes captured Edmund, King of East Anglia. They executed him when he refused to give up his Christian faith. The shrine to 'Edmund, King and Martyr' was set up here between 882 -903.
945	The Saxon King of England granted control of the town of St Edmund's Bury to the priests of the shrine of St Edmund. Between 900 and 1300 St Edmund was regarded as the patron saint of England.
1020	King Canute and Bishop Ailwin established a Benedictine monastery at the shrine of St Edmund.
1044	Edward the Confessor gave the monks control of West Suffolk.
1081	The abbot persuaded the Pope and William I to confirm that the abbey was independent of the local bishop, and even the archbishop.
1208-13	King John's dispute with the Pope resulted in the Interdict. Religious services were forbidden in the abbey and elsewhere.
1214	The Barons of England probably met at this abbey pretending to be on a pilgrimage, in order to plan their campaign to persuade King John to agree to the Magna Carta of civil liberties.
1215-17	Civil War broke out and the armies of both King John and the Barons passed through during their savage campaigns in the region.
1281	Edward I confirmed the new charter defining which revenues belonged to the abbot and which to the 80 monks.
1296	One of the first parliaments was summoned to meet at the Abbey of St Edmund by Edward I. He wanted the support of the Lords, Church and MPs in his dispute with the Pope over his misuse of church revenues for his wars against the Scots and the French.
1297	Edward I ordered the seizure of church and monastic property and revenues, including those of the Abbey of St Edmund.
1298	A compromise was reached between church and state and the abbey regained control.
1326	Queen Isabella invaded England and gathered her supporters at the Abbey of St Edmund, before advancing to overthrow Edward II.
1433	The boy-king Henry VI, accompanied by his guardians and the royal court came to spend Christmas at the abbey; in fact they stayed for the next three months.
1447	Henry VI summoned a Parliament to meet at the Abbey of St Edmund. His uncle Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, had enemies and they planned a 'treason' trial for him here. After his arrest he was found dead in his room at the nearby St Saviour's.
1486	King Henry VII visited the abbey.
1527	The year of 'The King's Great Matter' - Henry VIII's attempt to persuade the Pope to grant him a divorce from Queen Catherine of Aragon.
1529-34	Henry VIII's break with Rome. His sister Mary, Duchess of Suffolk (and former Queen of France) lived near Bury. She died in 1533. Her impressive funeral took place at the abbey.
1535	Henry VIII's inspectors visited the abbey to check up on the possessions of the 62 monks. The Abbey of St Edmund was found to be the fifth wealthiest of the English monasteries and cathedrals.
1538	Royal commissioners stripped the abbey of most of its gold, silver and other valuable items. With royal encouragement about a third of the monks had already resigned.



The idea of a monastic life was to stay inside the abbey where you could cut yourself off from the sin and confusion of the world outside. However it was not possible to sever all contact. Monasteries offered charity and hospitality to outsiders, such as pilgrims, and they also operated as traders, landowners and politicians.

### How did the town begin?

As the abbey developed the town grew up around it to serve the needs of the religious community. Between 1066 and 1087 the population of the town doubled as the abbey expanded. The town was wholly owned and controlled by the abbey. It was not granted a charter making it a corporation until 1606. Just as the abbey building towered over the town in medieval times, so the teaching and powers of the church dominated people's everyday lives

### How did the town serve the abbey?

The town provided the abbey with the huge army of workers needed to maintain such a large building and precinct. These included skilled crafts people such as masons, carpenters and bell founders, goldsmiths, glassblowers and embroiderers. Some tradesmen, such as stonemasons, lived on the abbey site. Others lived and worked in the town with like traders often living together in the same street. Evidence of this can be found in street names, for example Mill Road, Skinner Street and Looms Lane. Abbeygate Street used to be called Cooks Row. Gradually these workers banded together into groups called 'guilds' which represented their welfare. The town also provided the abbey with 'lay workers' (i.e. not monks) to work in the abbey on a daily basis although they did not 'live in'. They performed tasks such as gardening and nursing the sick.

### Why did the town pay money to the abbey?

All the town land, gates and markets belonged to the abbey monks who took money in the form of rents, tolls and taxes from the townspeople to pay for the building work and the needs of the monks. The sacrist and the cellarer were responsible for the collection of this money and had great influence in the town.

Even so the abbey was frequently in debt. During the 12th century, in the time of Abbot Hugh, large sums of money were borrowed from the Jewish moneylenders in the town. (Christians were not allowed to lend money at this time). After his election Abbot Samson put a stop to this practice and, following the riots of Palm Sunday in 1190 in

which 57 Jews were killed, expelled the Jewish community from the town.

### Did the abbey do anything for the town?

The abbey provided the town with a library, schools, a judicial (law and order) system and hospitals. At this time hospitals were used mainly as resting places for pilgrims and nursing homes for elderly monks. The site of St Saviours on the Fornham Road in Bury St Edmunds shows the remains of one such hospital. There were five others built on main roads into the town.

The monks supplied the town with mixtures of herbs to treat illnesses. These were the only medicines available at that time. Remedies included:

rosewater	to comfort the heart
savory	for bee stings
balm	to soothe the nerves, comfort the heart and drive away sadness
camomile	to reduce a fever and as a health tonic.

Details of remedies are contained in the manuscript *Bury Herbal* which was produced by the abbey.

The poor of the town also relied on the abbey for handouts of food and clothing as there was no other means of help.

Many of the townspeople gained a living from the monks. Even in 1086 the Domesday book speaks of 75 bakers, ale brewers, tailors, washerwomen, shoemakers, robe makers, cooks, porters, and purveyancers who '*daily wait upon the Saint, the abbot and the brethren*'.

Traders benefited from the many pilgrims who visited the shrine of St Edmund and spent money in the town. Innkeepers, bakers and pilgrim badge makers all catered for pilgrims.

### Why did things go wrong?

The lives of the townspeople were controlled very heavily by the abbey. Even the fishponds and the river were owned by the abbey and the townspeople needed permission for fishing and the use of the river by washerwomen. The abbey ran the market and demanded payment for stalls and a cut in the profits. The stallholders wanted to run their own market but King John forbade this in case it compromised the profits of the abbey.



As the guilds became more and more powerful, a bigger divide grew up between the abbey and the town. In 1198 the first major disputes occurred and the town guilds forced the abbey to accept only a fixed share of market profits.

Frequent disputes between the abbey and the town followed. This came to a head in 1327 when the townspeople stormed the abbey, abducted the abbot and killed several monks. This riot resulted in the Abbey Gate being partially destroyed. The town was fined and made to rebuild the gateway. It was rebuilt in a slightly different position, which is why it is not directly in line with the end of Abbeygate Street as the Norman Gate is with Churchgate Street.

Tensions did not disappear. In 1381, during the Peasants' Revolt, the abbey was plundered once again and the prior murdered. As the secular side of the town grew, the power of the abbey began to decline. The guilds became more powerful, and from the 13th century onwards the townspeople moved out of the jurisdiction of the sacrist's rents. From the 14th century onwards the abbey was in constant financial trouble. In the 15th century even the pilgrims' offerings were falling: the fashion for pilgrimage began to decline, and other shrines, such as that of St Thomas of Canterbury, became more popular. In 1539 the abbey was dissolved.

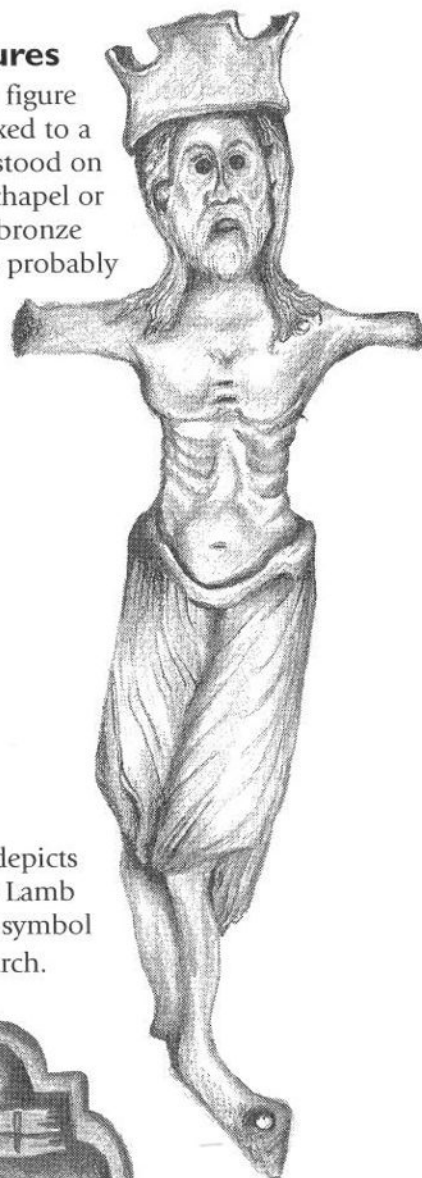
## ACTIVITIES

- 1 Look back at the plan of the abbey site. Make a list of all the jobs that would need to be done to keep the site running smoothly.
- 2 Design a pilgrim badge to sell to pilgrims who come to visit the shrine.
- 3 Look at a street map of Bury St Edmunds. Make a list of street names that are linked to different trades. Can you think of some new names for streets to link them to business and industry today?
- 4 Imagine you were a monk at the time of the 1327 riots. Write an account of what happened. Now write one as if you were a townspeople. How would the two accounts differ? You could set up a mock debate between the abbey and the town.

## ARTEFACTS

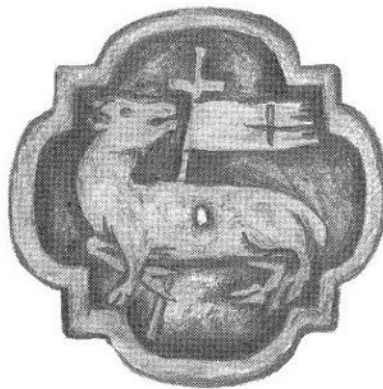
### Crucifixion Figures

This small cast metal figure of Christ was once fixed to a cross. It would have stood on an altar in a private chapel or shrine. It is made of bronze and so its owner was probably wealthy.



### Plaque

This copper plaque depicts the 'Agnus Dei' - the Lamb of God - a common symbol of the medieval Church.



### Copper Alloy Belt Fitment

Not everyone in the Middle Ages liked the church. This belt fitment, depicting a wolf dressed as a monk, is a variation on the story of the wolf in sheep's clothing.



# THE 'CHRONICLES OF JOCELIN'

## The Abbey in debt

I begin in the year in which the Flemings were taken prisoner outside the town (1173): that was the year in which I entered the monastery and Prior Hugh was deposed and Robert appointed in his place. By then Abbot Hugh had grown old and was losing his sight. A gentle and kind man, he was a good and devout monk, but lacked ability in business matters. He was too dependent on those around him and too ready to believe them, relying more on the opinions of others than on his own judgement. Although discipline, worship and everything connected with the Rule flourished within the cloister, external affairs were badly managed. Every employee, seeing that the abbot was naïve and elderly, ignored his duty and did as he pleased. The abbot's villages and all the hundreds were leased out: the woodlands were destroyed, the manorial houses were about to collapse, and from day to day everything grew steadily worse. The abbot sought refuge and consolation in a single remedy: that of borrowing money, to maintain at least the dignity of his household. In the last eight years of his life [1173-1180], sums of £100 or £200 were regularly added to the debt every Easter and Michaelmas. The bonds were always renewed, and further loans were taken out to pay the growing interest. This infection spread, from the top downwards, from the ruler to the ruled, so that before long each obedientiary had his own seal and pledged himself in debt as he chose, to both Jews and Christians. Silk copes, gold vessels, and other church ornaments were often pawned without the consent of the convent. I saw a bond made out to William son of Isabel, for £1,040, and another to Isaac son of Rabbi Joce, for £40 but I never discovered what lay behind these transactions.

## Relations with the town

In the tenth year of Abbot Samson's abbacy (1196-7) we agreed in our chapter to take a complaint to the abbot in his court. We said that although the rents and revenues of all the better towns and boroughs in England were on the increase, to the advantage of those who possessed them and to the profit of the landlords, this town was an exception, as it customarily yielded £40 and never produced any more. We maintained that the burgesses of the town were responsible for this state of affairs: they had made very many sizeable encroachments in the market-place, in shops, booths, and stalls, without the convent's permission, and on the sole authority of the town reeves, who paid a fixed annual sum to the sacrist, as if they were his officials, and could be dismissed at his pleasure. When the burgesses were summoned, they replied that they were in the king's protection, and on the question of their holdings, which they and their fathers had held for a year and a day, satisfactorily, peacefully, and without trouble, they refused to answer, as that would be contrary to the liberty of the town and their charters. They said that the ancient custom was that, without consulting the convent, the reeves granted sites of shops and booths in the market-place, for an annual rent to be paid to them. But we protested loudly, asking the abbot to dispossess them of those holdings for which they had no warrant. The abbot came to our council, as if he were one of us, and told us confidentially that he wanted to do all in his power to see that we retained our rights, but that he had to act according to judicial process, and without a court judgement he could not dispossess free men of lands or rents which, rightly or wrongly, they had held for a period of years. He said that if he were to do that he would be liable to punishment by

the king, according to the law of the land. The burgesses, therefore, agreed among themselves to offer the convent a payment of 100s., to end the dispute and ensure that they might continue in their holdings as before. But we would not allow this, preferring to postpone the case in the hope that under another abbot we might either recover everything or change the site of the market, and so the matter was deferred for several years.

## Relations with the town

On the day after Christmas Day (1197) there were gatherings in the cemetery, with contests and competitions between the abbot's servants and the townspeople, but matters escalated from words to blows, and then from punches to wounds and bloodshed. When the abbot heard about it, he asked some of those who had gone to the show, but had stood on the sidelines, to come and see him privately, and he commanded the names of the miscreants to be written down. He had all these summoned to appear before him in St Denis's chapel on the day after St Thomas (Becket)'s Day (i.e. 30 December). In the interim he did not invite any of the townspeople to his table as in previous years he had normally done on the first five days of Christmas.

On the appointed day, after the evidence on oath of sixteen sworn men had been heard, the abbot said, 'These wicked men obviously fall within the canon *sententiae latae*, but because they are laymen from here and roundabout, and do not appreciate how outrageous it is to commit such sacrilege, I shall publicly excommunicate them by name, so that others may be more fearful. I shall begin with my own household and servants to ensure that justice is done impartially.' This was carried out as soon as we had put on stoles and candles were lit. Then they all left the church, and after some discussion they undressed and, naked except for their pants, prostrated themselves in front of the church door. When the abbot's assistants, monks and clerks, came and told him tearfully that over a hundred naked men were lying there, the abbot also wept. But in his words and in his face he displayed the severity of the law, hiding his inner compassion, for he wished to be urged by his advisers to absolve the penitents, knowing that mercy is exalted above judgement, and that the church receives all those who repent. Therefore, when they had all been severely beaten and absolved, they took an oath that they would accept the church's judgement regarding the sacrilege they had committed.

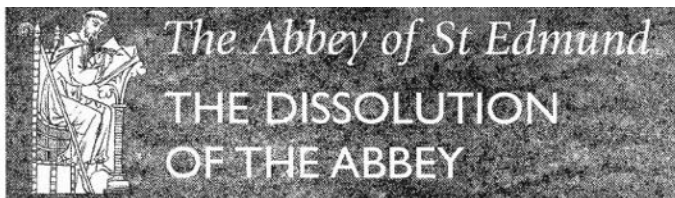
The following day they were given penances according to canon law, and the abbot took them all back into complete unity. But he uttered terrible threats against anyone who, by word or deed, should create discord, and he publicly prohibited assemblies and shows in the cemetery. So, when everyone had been restored to the blessing of peace, it was with great rejoicing that on the following days the townspeople feasted with their lord the abbot.

From Jocelin of Brakelond: *Chronicle of the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds*

# T I M E L I N E

600	The Saxon Lord Beodric established a village, Bedericesworth where Bury St Edmunds now stands.
945	The Saxon King of England granted control of the town of St Edmund's Bury to the monks of the shrine of St Edmund.
1263-67	In the civil wars of Simon de Montfort, the townsfolk, (the monks' feudal tenants) took the opportunity violently to coerce their masters into granting some rights of local self-government. However in 1267 the monks persuaded Henry III to support their regaining control over Bury's affairs.
1272	The Bury Fair, which since 1135 had developed into one of the important English trade fairs, was re-established as a six-week event and took place every autumn on Angel Hill.
1327	After a coup d'état central government was distracted for a while. The townsfolk of monastic towns such as St Albans and Bury seized the opportunity to demand their civic rights. At Bury St Edmunds there were bitter clashes between the townsfolk and troops of the monks. The abbey church and monastic buildings were looted and the Abbey Gate destroyed.
1349	The Black Death (bubonic plague) killed 40 of the 80 monks and about 1500 of Bury St Edmunds' population of c. 5000.
1379	There were bitter disputes between the monks over the choice of a new abbot. The townsfolk supported the Pope's choice but Richard II's government supported his rival. The monks collected the first of the Poll Taxes for the government.
1381	The third of the Poll Taxes resulted in the Peasants' Revolt. Peasant armies seized Bury St Edmunds and the townsfolk coerced the monks into granting civil rights. The abbey was attacked and the Prior and several monks were murdered.
1517	The monks were in bitter dispute with the townsfolk again. The abbot had Cardinal Wolsey summon the leading townsmen and order them to obey the monks. In Germany, Martin Luther began his struggle against the power of the Pope and the Catholic Church which led to the Reformation.





## The Abbey of St Edmund

### THE DISSOLUTION OF THE ABBEY

#### Why did the abbey come to an end?

Henry VIII wanted to divorce his wife Catherine of Aragon and marry his new love Anne Boleyn. In spite of many pregnancies, Catherine only had one living child, a girl named Mary, and Henry was anxious for a son to carry on the Tudor line. However, the Pope, who was head of the church, would not grant Henry a divorce.

At this time there was growing disenchantment with the catholic church. In Europe protestant leaders such as Martin Luther and John Calvin were establishing a new christianity which rejected the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church including monastic life. In England there were also many people who supported the movement for change. In 1531 Henry VIII decided to break with the Church of Rome and set himself up as head of the Church in England.

Once he had rejected the authority of the Pope, Henry VIII and his lieutenant Thomas Cromwell were in charge of the country's monasteries. Monks and nuns had to take an oath accepting Henry as Head of the Church. Most agreed, however some refused and were executed. Thomas Cromwell ordered an inspection and valuation of all church property. The abbey of Bury St Edmunds was found to have a gross income of £2336 16s 11d. It also distributed £400 a year and broken meat to the poor, provided hospitality for travellers and special gifts on feast days.

In April 1536 there were 800 monasteries throughout the country. They were very wealthy, owning land, beautiful buildings and precious jewels, and had great power not only in England but throughout Europe. Henry decided to close down the English monasteries, starting with the smallest ones, and to strip them of their wealth and power. He did this in 1539 and it was known as the "Dissolution of the Monasteries". The Abbey of St Edmund which was one of the largest in England was one of the last to be closed down. Only those which also served as cathedrals, such as Ely and Norwich, were spared.

#### What happened to the abbey?

The destruction of the abbey actually began in 1538 when the gold, silver and precious jewels of St Edmund's shrine were removed. The men sent to do the job found the shrine "very cumbrous to deface". Nevertheless, they managed to remove gold and silver valued at 5,000 marks - a great deal of money at that time.

On November 4th 1539 Abbot Melford (also known as Abbot Reeve) was forced to surrender the abbey to Henry VIII. All remaining valuables were removed and the land and buildings were sold for almost £413. Abbot Melford was granted a pension of 500 marks (£330) a year while the monks received an average of £5 a year. The abbot retired from his magnificent palace (which was converted to a private



house) and went to live not far from the abbey in a small house at the top of Crown Street. However, he died shortly afterwards and was buried in St Mary's Church on the corner of the abbey precinct.

#### What happened to the remains of St Edmund?

No one is really sure what happened to Edmund's remains. One story suggests that they were destroyed by a great fire in the abbey in 1465, and another that they were buried secretly by the monks at the time of the dissolution of the monastery. There is also a claim that they were sent to France and later returned to England to be buried at Arundel.

#### Why is so little of the abbey left?

The site of the abbey became a quarry for the townspeople. They stripped the high quality stone from the buildings and re-used it elsewhere in the town. The stone was doubly precious to them as there was no local stone. The palace was demolished in 1720. However, the West Front had homes built



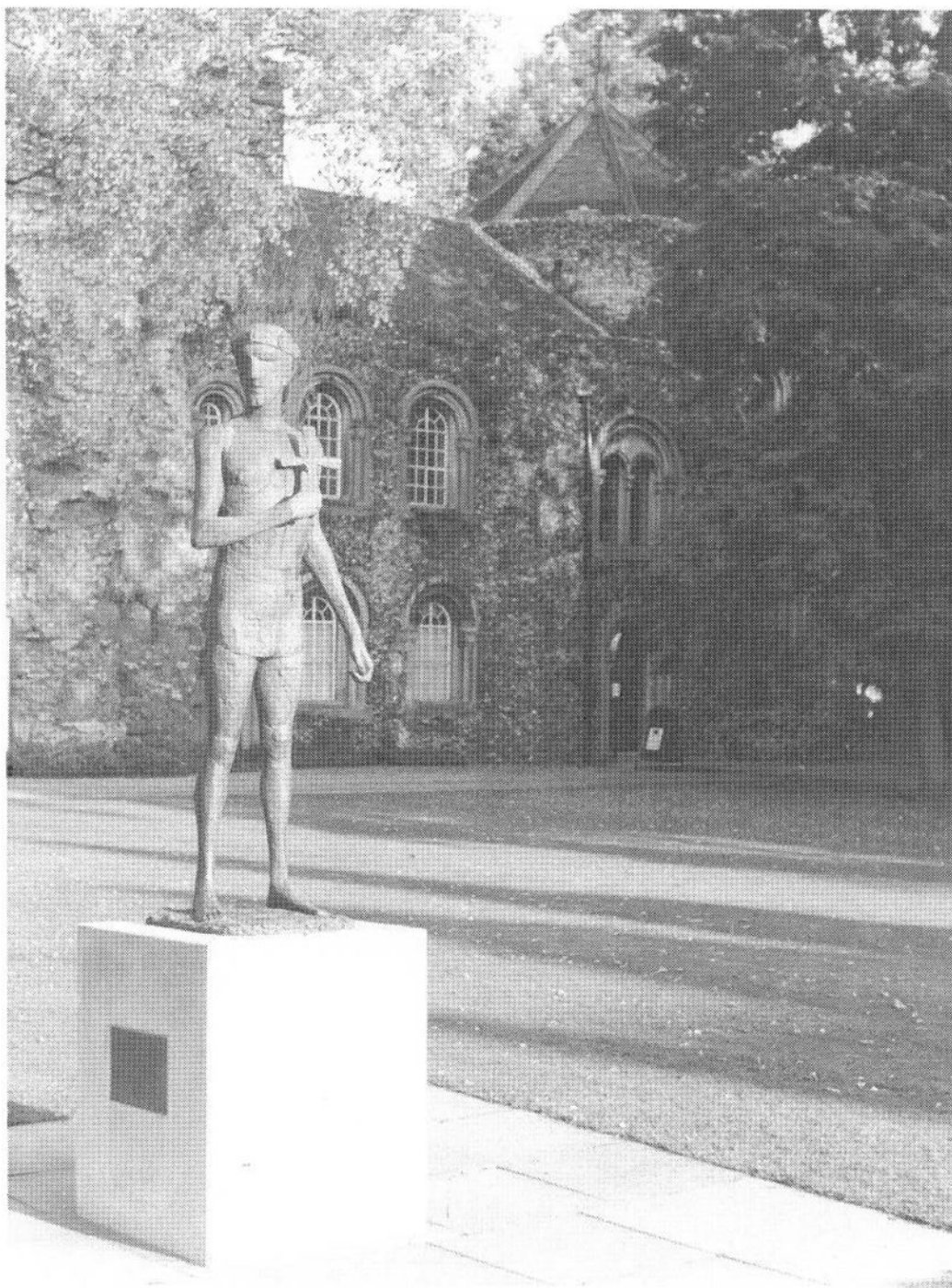
into it during the 17th and 19th centuries and still stands. It is very unusual to see ruins with houses built into them in this way. Samson's Tower, at the south end of the West Front, was a stable by 1749.

### Who owns the abbey now?

In 1798 the Borough of St Edmundsbury bought the Great Churchyard. In 1863 Samson's Tower was converted into a Probate Office where wills were kept. When the Probate Office moved out, the tower became a house. Today it houses the Abbey Visitor Centre. In 1953 the Town Council bought the Abbey Gardens from the Marquis of Bristol. The tables had turned, and the abbey site now belonged to the town.

## ACTIVITIES

- 1 How do you think the monks survived when the abbey closed? Look back at the information on roles. Make a list of any skills that would help them. Which of the monks would be best off?
- 2 If Henry VIII hadn't closed the abbey, what do you think would have happened to it? Make a new timeline for the abbey from 1538 onwards.



*The remains of the West front of the abbey with a statue of St Edmund by Elizabeth Frink in the foreground. Samson's Tower on the right houses the Abbey Visitor Centre where there is a scale model of the abbey, displays of artefacts, interactive activities and audio information. Guided tours of the ruins can be arranged, telephone (01284) 757488 for details.*