Festive Culture in Pre-Reformation Rural Suffolk

by

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of the relationship between festive culture and rural communities in the pre-Reformation period. Using a wide range of evidence, both material and documentary, it uses the county of Suffolk as a case-study. This thesis argues against the prevailing view that festive culture constituted a distinct break from everyday life. It demonstrates that festive culture was an important part of the quotidian working routine and, as such, takes as its starting point evidence of festivity rooted in everyday practices, much of which has never been studied in detail before. This study argues for consideration of the commerciality of festive culture since a large proportion of the evidence is, necessarily, of a financial nature, and it proposes a new methodology for examining the place and function of festivity in pre-Reformation communities.

The first four chapters survey a wide range of pre-Reformation festive behaviour, exploring its organizational and economic significance, its relationship to the landscape, and its impact on personal possessions. The last two chapters redress the concept of festive culture as entertainment, and festive culture as carnival. They argue that these expressions of festive culture are just as important to everyday livelihoods as they are a break from the working routine.

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Provision and costs for sailings from Southwold

Abbreviations

BL	British Library
CUP	Cambridge University Press
EETS	Early English Texts Society
ERO	Essex Records Office
NA	National Archive
NRO	Norfolk Records Office
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*
OUP	Oxford University Press
PL	*The Paston Letters*
PSIAH	*Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History*
REED	*Records of Early English Drama*
SIAH	Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History
SRO(B)	Suffolk Records Office, Bury St Edmunds
SRO(I)	Suffolk Records Office, Ipswich
SRO(L)	Suffolk Records Office, Lowestoft
SRS	Suffolk Records Society
UEA	University of East Anglia

Introduction

Introduction: Festive Culture

This is a study of the relationship between festive culture and the daily lives of rural communities in England, specifically the county of Suffolk, in the period leading up to the Reformation. It is important, therefore, to first specify what is actually meant here by "festive culture". The word "festive" can be defined as "of or pertaining to a feast" and, in the Middle Ages, the word "feast" was very much associated with religious anniversaries.[1] The medieval calendar was full of days dedicated to saints and other religious holidays. These were particularly important to rural communities as they meant a total or partial abstention from work. Workers were also expected to attend matins, Mass and evensong.[2] G.C. Homans, writing on rural communities in the thirteenth century, noted that the major religious festivals signified a time of rest for agricultural workers: "Easter Week…together with Whitsun week and the twelve days of Christmas, were the villein's three long holidays."[3] The full definition of a feast, however, is "a religious anniversary to be observed with rejoicing", and to describe something as festive is to depict it as "mirthful, joyous, glad, cheerful."[4] Certainly, for pre-Reformation workers, these rest days were marked with rituals and entertainments. Some feast days were less noted for their religious observances than for their more secular rituals. St Agnes' Eve (21st January), for example, was a

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[1] *OED*, s.v. "festive", "feast".

[2] Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p.42.

[3] G.C. Homans, *English Villages of the Thirteenth Century,* (New York, 1941), p.379 in François Laroque, *Shakespeare's Festive World: Elizabethan Seasonal Entertainment and the Professional Stage*, trans. Janet Lloyd, (Cambridge: CUP, 1991), p.91.

[4] *OED*, s.v. "feast", "festive".

time when young women sought to discover the identity of their future sweethearts.[5] Homans also noted that: "the celebration of these great feasts of the husbandman's year fell into a single pattern. They began with a feast of the Church. There followed a week or more in which a villein was set free from working [...] Then the end of the vacation and the resumption of work was marked by another festival [...] a feast of the folk. This pattern is clear in the celebration of Christmas. It began with the feast of Christmas itself. There followed the twelve days of holiday, and then work began after Plow Monday."[6]

James Stokes, in his work on performance in Lincolnshire and elsewhere, has found evidence of a "rich culture" which marked religious and folk festivals.[7] His definition of performance encompasses any "mimetic, musical or ritualistic form of play used to entertain or otherwise engage an audience."[8] These activities occurred on important dates in the liturgical and seasonal year including Christmas, Epiphany, May Day, Whitsun and harvest time.[9] David Cressy has stated that "special days called for special action" and identified a "versatile vocabulary of celebration".[10] This vocabulary took on a multitude of forms including religious services, public processions, pageants, banquets, plays and dances. According to Cressy, "customary festive behaviour involved commensality, liberality, conviviality, and lavish

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[5] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p.13.
[6] Homans, *English Villages*, p.379, in Laroque, *Shakespeare's Festive World*, p.91. For more on the celebrations of Plough Monday see below: Chapter 2: Festive Culture and the Landscape.
[7] James Stokes, ed., *Records of Early English Drama: Lincolnshire*, Vol. 2, 'The Editorial Apparatus', (Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press and the British Library, 2009), p.530.
[8] Stokes, *Lincolnshire*, p.530.
[9] Stokes, *Lincolnshire*, p.405.
[10] David Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England*, (Stroud: Sutton, 1989), p.67.

dispensations of alcohol."[11] Meg Twycross in her introduction to a collection of essays on festive drama has concluded, however, that, while "festive" is something connected with a festival, it is not necessarily cheerful and celebratory. Sometimes, rituals, such as those on Good Friday, are more solemn.[12] It is important, therefore, that any study of festive culture should also consider this element.

The link between festivity and ritual was further highlighted by Charles Phythian-Adams in his work on the communal year in Coventry.[13] Between Christmas and the end of June, everyday life was interrupted by periods of festivity. He identified the period of the year from Christmas to the 24th June, which could coincide with the feast of Corpus Christi, as the "ritualistic half" of the year.[14] Phythian-Adams observed that amongst other things, during this ritualistic half of the year, the citizens of Coventry took part in the burning of palms on Palm Sunday, decorated the city with foliage at summer feasts, and lit midsummer bonfires. Parish churches also dramatised Palm Sunday with the unveiling of the rood and Easter day with the resurrection from the Easter sepulchre.[15] In Coventry, the ritualistic half of the year also embraced every major public ceremony and was emphasised by processions. That on St George's Day included a representation of the saint's fight with the dragon, whilst no less than four processions were held on the feast of Corpus

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[11] Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, p.67.

[12] Meg Twycross, *Festive Drama: Papers from the Sixth Triennial Colloquium of the International Society for the Study of Medieval Theatre, Lancaster, 13-19 July, 1989*, (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1996), p.1.

[13] Charles Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the Citizen: The Communal Year at Coventry 1450-1550' in Peter Clark and Paul Slack ed., *Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700: Essays in Urban History*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), pp.57-85.

[14] Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the Citizen', p.70.

[15] Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the Citizen', p.72. For more on the Easter sepulchre see Ronald Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain*, (Oxford: OUP, 1996), pp.190-1.

Christi.[16] But the features of the ritualistic half of the year were not all joyful and celebratory. This half of the year also saw periods of prohibitions including dietary and sexual abstinence during Lent.[17]

Phythian-Adams' description of a "ritualistic half" of the year suggests a link between festival and time, and other scholars concur. For Twycross, "festive" implies something traditional and recurrent.[18] For François Laroque, festivity is "a social manifestation linked with natural and seasonal cycles and rooted in a…vision of time and the cosmos."[19] They both see festivals as a manifestation of an annual cycle, defined by a break with everyday time.[20] For many medieval people, festivals were both a means of marking time and anticipating time.[21] They would mark the passing of their everyday lives through anticipation of the next festival. Some scholars see festivals as the focus of ordinary people's lives: "between one festival and the next, the calendar consists of hollow, anonymous days which only exist in relation to the more meaningful dates of the festivals."[22] Phythian-Adams identified the second half of the year as the "secular" half, stating that, in this period, there were no extended holidays: "essentially, this was a time for uninterrupted, normal economic activities."[23] However, he was also careful to qualify his dichotomy of the year. He did not suggest there was a slowing of economic activity in the ritualistic half of the year in Coventry, only that the same routines of working life were carried out against

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[16] Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the Citizen', pp.72, 74.
[17] Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the Citizen', p.72; Laroque, *Shakespeare's Festive World*, p.83.
[18] Twycross, *Festive Drama*, p.1.
[19] Laroque, *Shakespeare's Festive World*, p.3.
[20] Laroque, *Shakespeare's Festive World*, pp.14 & 74.
[21] Laroque, *Shakespeare's Festive World*, p.75.
[22] Roger Callois, *L'homme et le sacré,* (Paris, 1939; repr. 1950), p.225 in Laroque, *Shakespeare's Festive World*, p.75.
[23] Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the Citizen', p.73.

a different background.[24] Festive culture, therefore, was fixed into the very experience of time.

Previous Studies

The study of pre-Reformation festive culture is not new. For the purposes of the present study, it is important, therefore, to survey the existing scholarly work. That the manifestation of festive culture in the pre-Reformation period was something opposed to everyday life is a common notion amongst scholars. Some studies have followed Phythian-Adams' chronological framework and taken each festival as a starting point for a study of related ritual and recreational behaviour. Ronald Hutton, for example, is "concern[ed] essentially with those annual festivals which were celebrated, regionally or nationally, with public rituals or customary pastimes."[25] His is a nationwide survey of both England and Wales, and the first chapter gives a systematic portrait of seasonal rituals and pastimes in the fifty years leading up to the Reformation. The second chapter traces the roots of these behaviours, whilst the subsequent chapters explore the impact of the Reformation and other social changes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Hutton's next work followed a similar chronological pattern.[26] Based on a *Book of Days*, it traces the complete history of communal customs in England, Wales and Scotland. Often, particular festivals are given whole chapters to themselves. Hutton, however, is open about the limitations of his evidence, stating that he only considers activities specifically linked to the passage of the year. He also does not include sports and

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[24] Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the Citizen', p.73.

[25] Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year 1400-1700*, (Oxford: OUP, 1994), p.1.

[26] Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*.

entertainments that were "no more than superficially related to particular festivals."[27] Steve Roud likewise traces the history and development of customs and festivals of communities in England until the present day.[28] He also adopts a calendric approach and addresses the problems arising from this when considering moveable feasts. Roud has attempted to research all known customs from the entire country and this work is an ideal reference tool for regional studies.

Of particular expressions of festive culture, carnival festivities and behaviour have attracted much scholarly attention. Mikhail Bakhtin's seminal work of the 1930s, published in 1965, examines the culture of carnival as depicted through the work of the early sixteenth-century writer François Rabelais.[29] Another important study of European carnival traditions is Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's *Carnival in Romans*. This discusses the relationship between carnival, authority and social unrest through the extraordinary activities of late sixteenth-century Mardi Gras in the south of France.[30] More recently, Chris Humphrey has redressed the theoretical framework for the study of medieval carnival and its associated behaviours, arguing for a new way of thinking about the functions of carnival.[31] He believes that many approaches compare carnival with abstract models, and that the interpretation of carnival as a purely societal "safety-valve" is limiting. His method, which argues for thorough

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[27] Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, p.ix.
[28] Steve Roud, *The English Year: A Month-by-Month Guide to the Nation's Customs and Festivals from May Day to Mischief Night*, (London: Penguin, 2006).
[29] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswosky, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).
[30] Emmnuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Carnival in Romans: A People's Uprising at Romans 1579-1580*, trans. Mary Feeney, (London: Penguin, 1980).
[31] Chris Humphrey, *The Politics of Carnival: Festive Misrule in Medieval England*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).

contextualisation of the evidence in order to produce fuller readings, is something applicable to all studies of festive culture.

There are also shorter studies considering the relationship between carnival and drama, especially East Anglian drama. Anthony Gash has placed the play *Mankind* firmly in the southern European carnival tradition, whilst Tom Pettitt has aligned the play with Germanic carnival tradition.[32] Other studies have analysed the ritual of festive culture. Duffy has examined the religious side of festivals, especially the associated liturgy.[33] Edward Muir undertook a huge survey of European ritual behaviour from 1400 through to 1700.[34] The festive culture of late sixteenth-century England, especially in relation to the work of Shakespeare, has been considered by Laroque. Many of his observations on communal festivity are also applicable to an earlier period. Equally, Cressy's book on early-modern festive culture is valuable for a study of the pre-Reformation period, especially the first two chapters which discuss festivity in the early-sixteenth century and changes in behaviour during the rest of the early-modern period.

Much work has also been carried out on another aspect of pre-Reformation festive culture: drama. Studies of medieval drama predominantly take two approaches: research into surviving play texts, and research into evidence for dramatic activities in surviving archival records. William Tydeman has stated that: "the documentary

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[32] Anthony Gash, 'Carnival Against Lent: The Ambivalence of Medieval Drama' in *Medieval Literature: Criticism, Ideology and History*, ed. David Aers, (Brighton: Harvester, 1986), pp.74-96; Tom Pettitt, '*Mankind*: An English *Fastnachtspiel*?' in Twycross, *Festive Drama*, pp. 190-202.
[33] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*.
[34] Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2005).

evidence… [is] abundant but altogether shadowier [than manuscript play texts] and more difficult of interpretation…"[35] In an effort to maximise the potential of documentary evidence, the *Records of Early English Drama* project was set up.[36] This project aims to "locate, transcribe and edit historical surviving documentary evidence of drama, secular music, and other communal entertainment and ceremony from the Middle Ages until 1642, when the Puritans closed the London theatres."[37] Twenty-seven collections have so far been published, covering rural parishes through to city communities. The most recent is *Inns of Court* published in 2010.[38] The collection for Suffolk, which is currently being edited by Stokes, has yet to be completed. *REED* editors, however, do not routinely interpret the evidence they discover, which some scholars have seen as problematic. For example, Peter Holland has commented that extraction of such evidence from its original place in the document displaces it from a crucial context within which it has particular meanings.[39] Similarly, Richard Beadle claims that record editing is "not entirely satisfactory" as it removes references to plays from their context; the "relative social and economic importance of the drama at the given time and place is partially lost."[40]

Many studies of medieval drama have both contextualised and interpreted documentary evidence and surviving playscripts from East Anglia. Beadle's thesis

[35] William Tydeman, 'An Introduction to Medieval English Theatre', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, ed. Richard Beadle, 1st edn. (Cambridge: CUP, 1994), p.1.

[36] Henceforth known as *REED*.

[37] *Records of Early English Drama*- www.reed.utoronto.ca, retrieved 19/11/13.

[38] Alan H. Nelson, and John R. Elliott Jr eds, *Inns of Court*, (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2010).

[39] Peter Holland, 'Theatre Without Drama: Reading *REED*" in *From Script to Stage in Early Modern England*, ed. Peter Holland and Stephen Orgel, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p.51.

[40] Richard Beadle, *The Medieval drama of East Anglia: Studies in Dialect, Documentary Records and Stagecraft*, (Unpub. D.Phil thesis, University of York, 1977), vol. 1, p.135.

studies the dialect of East Anglian playscripts to learn more about drama networks in

Norfolk and Suffolk, and relates documentary evidence to evidence from the scripts

to shed more light upon the prevalent staging convention known as 'place-and-

scaffold'.[41] Richard Wright's PhD thesis builds upon his previous study of the social

context of community dramatic festivity to include the impact of guilds upon parish

drama. He also includes a calendar of festivities related to the church and argues for

the performance of certain plays upon particular festivals.[42] In a similar vein, Gail

McMurray Gibson focuses upon expressions of piety in Norfolk and Suffolk and their

impact upon drama and art. Chapter five of her study, especially, considers Bury St

Edmunds and its monastery as a centre for drama.[43] Religious ritual incorporated

into East Anglian drama is also considered in detail in Penny Granger's recent study.

Through a detailed study of the only surviving East Anglian cycle, the *N-Town* Play,

she argues that liturgy was an essential part of the medieval play-going experience.[44]

The subject of festive culture is, therefore, very clearly one of extensive mature and

scholarly debate, but there are still questions which remain unresolved. The present

study addresses the idea that festive culture was the "other" to behaviour which was

routine, domestic and economic. It argues against this notion that festive culture

was something that necessarily constituted a break from the quotidian. On this

basis, I shall seek to reconceive the relationship between this category and festive

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[41] Beadle, *The Medieval Drama of East Anglia*.

[42] R.R. Wright, *Medieval Theatre in East Anglia: A Study of Drama and the Community in Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk, 1200-1580, with Special Reference to Game, Interlude and Play in the late-Fifteenth Century and early-Sixteenth Century*, (Unpub. MLitt thesis, University of Bristol, 1971); R.R. Wright, *Theatre in late-medieval East Anglia*, (Unpub. PhD thesis, University of Bristol, 1992).

[43] Gail McMurray Gibson,*The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

[44] Penny Granger, *The N-Town Play: Drama and Liturgy in Medieval East Anglia*, (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2009).

culture. As historians, in general, we ought to move away from simple binary oppositions and think in new ways about how pre-Reformation festive culture and the everyday interacted. This study shows that festive culture was a very important part of the everyday, and that it is simply not possible to separate, completely, the festive from the quotidian.

Because of this relationship, unlike previous studies of festive culture, my study is not calendric or chronological; it does not take festivals as a starting point for a discussion of related ritual and celebratory behaviour. Instead, my starting point is the use of evidence of everyday practices for discussion of how festive culture was manifest in everyday life. Consequently, I will argue for the significance of commerciality in realtion to festive culture. As part of routine, domestic and economic life, festive culture contributed to both individual and corporate incomes, and a substantial part of this study will discuss the manipulation of festive culture for financial reasons. Furthermore, I agree with Twycross that not all aspects of festive culture were joyous. Then, as now, everyday life had many solemn moments as well as celebratory ones, and this study will take into account ritual and festive behaviours of this kind.

Suffolk in the pre-Reformation period

In order to re-examine the relationship between festive culture and the everyday in the pre-Reformation period, this study will concentrate on evidence from Suffolk. The choice to concentrate on a small region is not intended to make this a "local history". Instead, Suffolk is used as a case study, a helpful context for shedding light

on the greater nature of festive culture in communities across pre-Reformation England. In Ken Farnhill's work on guilds and the community in late-medieval East Anglia, he has stated that concentration on a region gives his work sensible boundaries: "choosing parishes within a single region allow[s] the wider context to be described more easily."[45] The use of close research into one region also allows a much wider range of evidence for festive culture to be considered. A larger area, incorporating a greater number of communities would, of necessity, allow only for the study of a few aspects, such as drama or carnival and that would run counter to the main aim of this thesis. It should also be underscored that is a study of rural communities: in East Anglia the vast majority of settlements were villages. Previous studies of aspects of festive culture in relation to Suffolk have concentrated on the urban centres of Thetford, Bury St Edmunds and Ipswich.[46] This replicates a broader pattern. We know much more about urban than rural festive culture in the later middle ages.[47] One of the aims of the present study is to redress this imbalance

The decision to study Suffolk in the pre-Reformation period has much to do with its relative affluence. Mark Bailey has described how the wealth of Suffolk in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries meant that many people achieved a decent level of income, and "opted for leisure pursuits in preference to maximizing their earnings

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[45] Ken Farnhill, *Guilds and the Parish Community in Late Medieval East Anglia, c.1470-1550*, (York and Woodbridge: York Medieval Press and the Boydell Press, 2001), p.2.

[46] For Thetford: Richard Beadle, 'Plays and Playing at Thetford and Nearby, 1498-1540', *Theatre Notebook*, 32 (1978), pp.4-11; for Bury St Edmunds: Gibson, *Theater of Devotion*. For Ipswich: John Southworth, *The English Medieval Minstrel*, (Boydell: Woodbridge, 1989).

[47] See, for example, Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the Citizen'; Margaret Rogerson, *The York Mystery Plays: Performance in the City*, (Woodbridge and York: Boydell and Brewer and York Medieval Press, 2011); David Mills, 'The Chester Cycle', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, ed. Richard Beadle and Alan Fletcher, 2nd edn., (Cambridge: CUP, 2008), pp. 125-151; Chris Humphrey, 'Time and Urban Culture in Late Medieval England', in *Time and the Medieval World*, ed. Chris Humphrey and W.H. Omrod, (York: York Medieval Press, 2001), pp.105-118.

in arduous physical occupations."[48] Rural Suffolk parishioners clearly had spare time and cash to be used in festive culture. As will be discussed later, Suffolk was not an "economically depressed backwater" but a thriving centre of industry.[49] This was mainly due to the cloth weaving industry, especially in the south of the county (see Figure 1). The parish of Lavenham was listed within the twenty wealthiest towns in England in the fifteenth century and, by 1525, it had become the twelfth richest in England.[50] The northern area of Suffolk, that around the rivers Waveney and Little Ouse, was home to the linen weaving industry (see Figure 2). This type of cloth production "combined well with part-time farming, while the cultivation of hemp fitted better with dairy farming which was already dominant in this district."[51] The coastal areas of Suffolk were heavily involved in fishing and trade, and this combination of cloth and linen weaving, agriculture and trade, led to a comparatively wealthy population. The Lay Subsidy Return of 1524, a graduated tax on land, moveable foods or wages, shows a high number of taxpayers in the south-east of the county, due to the wool-cloth industry; the north-west, due to the emergence of yeomen farmers; and along coastal areas, due to foreign and coastal trade, fishing and boat-building industries (see Figure 3). [52]

This wealth, built upon excellent trade links with mainland Europe and the rest of the British Isles, was aided by the ease of communication across the county. The

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[48] Mark Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk: An Economic and Social History, 1200-1500*, (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007), p.251.
[49] Gibson, *Theater of Devotion*, p.19.
[50] Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk*, pp. 273 & 282.
[51] Nesta Evans, 'The Linen Industry' in *An Historical Atlas of Suffolk*, ed. D. Dymond and E. Martin, (Ipswich: Suffolk County Council, 1999), p.142.
[52] *Suffolk in 1524: Subsidy Returns*, Suffolk Green Books, X, (Woodbridge: George Booth, 1910).
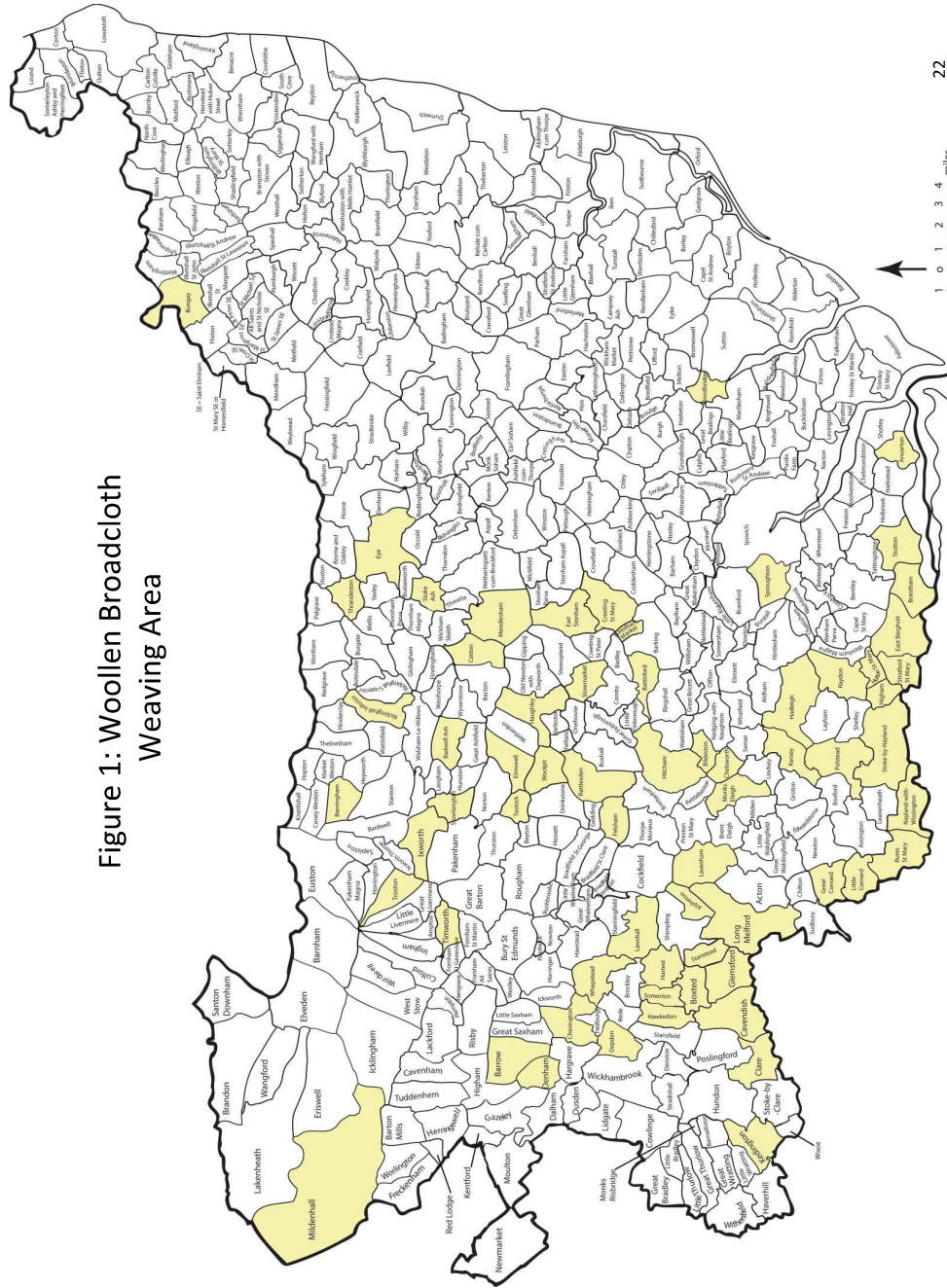
Figure 1: Woollen Broadcloth
Weaving Area
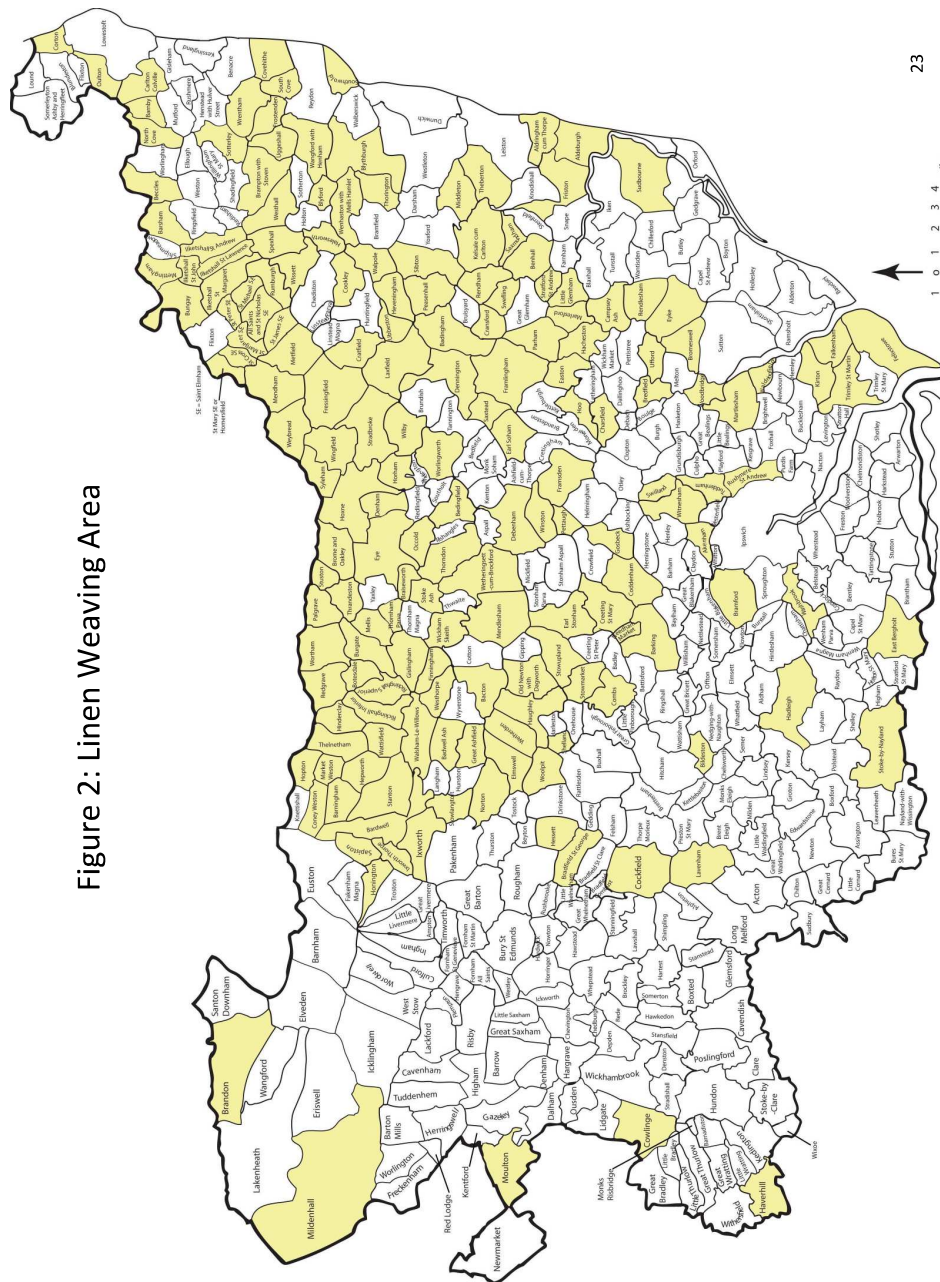
Figure 2: Linen Weaving Area

Figure 3: Number of Taxpayers in 1524
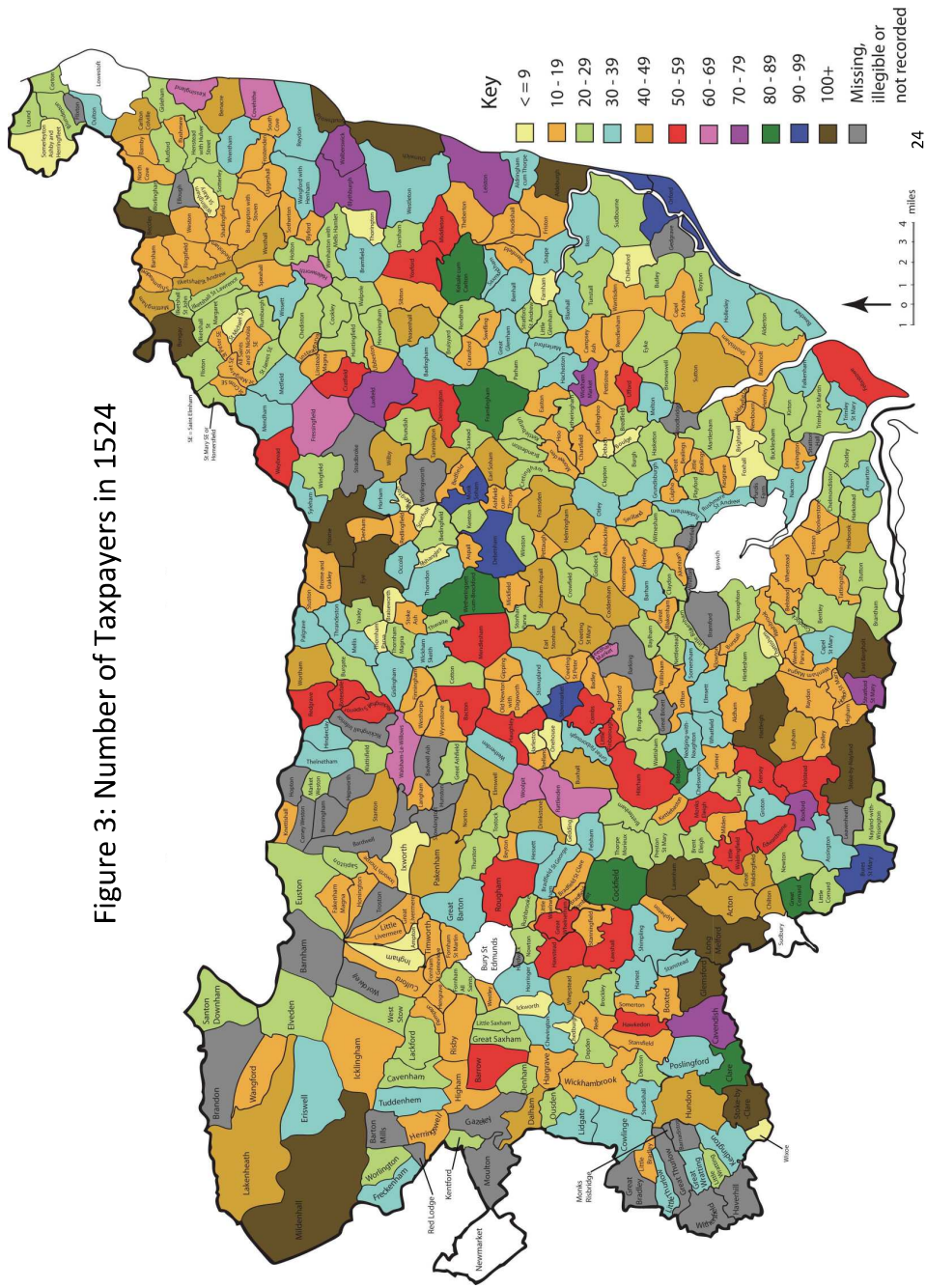
major rivers were navigable; the Stour, Gipping and Lark, and the Waveney rivers cut deep in to the south, middle and north of Suffolk, respectively.[53] As passage by boat significantly reduced the cost of transporting bulky goods and building materials, many rural producers used the rivers for transport and, therefore, to access distant markets profitably.[54] Grain, for example, was traded nationally, especially to the London markets. Farms in many Suffolk parishes were within easy access of a navigable waterway. Even landlocked parishes could consider trading with markets further afield. For farmers working in Hoxne, for example, grain could be carted overland for the relatively short distance to Bungay, from where it could be taken downstream to Great Yarmouth, and thence into national or international trade.[55] Traders from Cambridge, the East Midlands and York came to the river ports of north-west Suffolk, whilst coal from Newcastle and ashlar from Northamptonshire was shipped as far inland as Brandon, Lakenheath and Mildenhall.[56] Fairs in Suffolk also attracted traders from across the county. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the annual fair at Bury St Edmunds was established as one of the greatest in England, attracting clothiers from all the leading British textile towns and from Flanders. One London merchant considered Bury fair sufficiently important to have spices and dyestuffs forwarded to supplement stock he had brought from London. Later in the Middle Ages, Suffolk fairs became known nationally for a particular trade. Halesworth fair was famous for northern bullocks, whilst, in the later fifteenth century, Woolpit fair had an established reputation for trade in horses.[57]

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[53] Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk*, p.2.
[54] Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk*, p.164.
[55] Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk*, p.169.
[56] Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk*, p.164.
[57] Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk*, pp.119-120.

These Suffolk fairs also had an international reputation. Flemish merchants at the Bury St Edmunds fair became so prominent and influential that the authorities passed edicts to prevent them from monopolizing the trade in leather and velvet goods. In the thirteenth century, Henry III sent a royal tailor to Bury fair to obtain cloth from Ghent and Ypres.[58] The economy of Suffolk was strongly influenced by links with the Continent which was facilitated by the ease of river and sea-borne travel. The port of Ipswich, for example, traded grain with Flanders, especially Bruges and Damme, cheese and hides with the Low Countries and Brittany, and wine from Bordeaux.[59] The smaller ports also had strong international links. Near Ipswich, the ports of Orwell and Goseford (on the Deben estuary) handled imports of wine from the Rhineland and France.[60] In the west of the county, the riverine ports of Brandon, Lakenheath and Mildenhall handled millstones, tar and timber from the Baltic traded upstream from Lynn, whilst the eastern port town of Woodbridge had a reputation for processing hemp and making rope which attracted Flemish merchants.[61] Even the tiny port of Dunwich which, by the fifteenth century had become hugely diminished by erosion and silt, was still dispatching raw wool, especially to Calais. These links were more than just economic. In 1519 Walter Caws

[58] R.S. Gottfried, *Bury St Edmunds and the Urban Crisis, 1290-1539*, (Princeton, 1982), p.90, in Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk*, p.119.
[59] Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk*, p.169 & 269.
[60] Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk*, p.130.
[61] Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk*, p. 164; Diarmuid MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors: Politics and Religion in an English County 1500-1600*, (Oxford: OUP, 1986), p.283.

of the nearby parish of Southwold requested burial in St Nicholas church in Calais, leaving 3s 4d towards the steeple.[62] He clearly considered Calais his spiritual home.

By the later fifteenth century, eastern Suffolk seaports had developed overseas trade even further as new commercial opportunities opened up with Iceland. Suffolk mariners fished in the large stock of deep-sea fish such as haddock, ling and cod in the waters around Iceland and the Faroe Islands. In the early sixteenth century, one third of all boats in Icelandic waters came from Suffolk, particularly the parishes of Southwold, Lowestoft, Woodbridge and Walberswick, and the income from a successful voyage could stretch to hundreds of pounds.[63] In addition, excavations at Walberswick have produced artefacts linking to trade with Germany, Holland and south-west France.[64] This suggests that rural Suffolk parishes were not in any way idyllic, rural backwaters shielded from events and issues taking place further afield. As Peter Warner suggests:

> The gossip in Walberswick's alehouses was not that of an introspective rural
> community, but of an outward-looking diverse crowd, talking about distant
> and exotic places. Walberswick was not a community of rustics, or even
> urban artisans, it had the social heterogeneity of a sea-port in miniature, it
> was a cosmopolitan community, semi-urban in character, proud and
> independent by nature.[65]

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[62] SRO(I) IC/AA2/8/73, Southwold, 1519 in Judith Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour: Death and Commemoration in the Deanery of Dunwich, 1370-1547*, (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2001), p.17.

[63] See E.R. Cooper, 'The Dunwich Iceland Ships', *The Mariner's Mirror*, 25 (1939), pp.170-179.

[64] MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors*, p.283.

[65] Peter Warner, *Bloody Marsh: A Seventeenth-Century Village in Crisis*, (Macclesfield: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 6.

As has already been suggested, this holds true for many rural Suffolk parishes. Therefore, evidence from these prosperous, cosmopolitan parishes, well able to support many aspects of festive culture, is that of communities well connected with the social, political and religious issues of a wider world. In part, it is this which makes Suffolk such a useful context for exploring the links between the quotidian and the festive in the pre-Refamatory period.

The legal landscape of Suffolk

The agricultural landscape of Suffolk, and therefore its economy, was dominated by the church during the period covered by this thesis.   Much of Suffolk's farmland was under ecclesiastical lordship; at the Dissolution, the Court of Augmentations was presented with over two hundred manors to sell for the King.[66] This is evidence of considerable ecclesiastical wealth and much of it was concentrated in a few hands. Of the Suffolk monastic institutions, everything was under the shadow of the Benedictine abbey at Bury St Edmunds which housed the relics of St Edmund. A centre of major pilgrimage, at its height it housed eighty monks, over one hundred retainers and servants and a famous manuscript library of over 2,000 volumes. As a result, the development of rival institutions was restricted and, on the eve of the Dissolution, Bury abbey's income was £1,565, over five times greater than that of its nearest rival.[67] There were a number of smaller foundations, especially in the east of the

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[66] Peter Northeast, 'Religious Houses', in *A Historical Atlas of Suffolk*, ed. Dymond and Martin, p.10.
[67] David Dymond and Peter Northeast, *A History of Suffolk*, (Chichester: Phillimore, 1995), pp. 38 & 39.

county.   Of these, the most important for women was at Campsey Ash.   This community of Augustinian canonesses attracted considerable endowments and became a fashionable resort for women of high birth.[68]

The abbot of Bury St Edmunds was also the lord of the Liberty of St Edmund. Another Liberty, that of St Etheldreda, was granted to the abbey of Ely. The eight and a half hundreds of the Liberty of St Edmund were presented to the abbey by Edward the Confessor's mother, Emma, wife of King Cnut.[69] This had turned the western half of the county into "a quasi-separate state" presided over by the abbots of Bury.[70] The abbey profited from many of the legal privileges vested in a hundred and usually associated with the Crown. It appointed and ran the office of coroner, held a great court which was equivalent to a county court, administered hundred and leet courts, and dealt with all petty legal cases within the Liberty.[71] Similarly, the abbey of Ely held five and a half hundreds in east Suffolk. Granted by King Edgar in 970, it was known as the 'Wicklaw' and then the Liberty of St Etheldreda.[72] In effect, this liberty acted as a privatized legal franchise and maintaining its own jail at the administrative centre of Melton near Woodbridge.[73] The remainder of Suffolk was known as the 'Geldable' or 'taxable' part and remained under royal jurisdiction (see Figure 5). When royal taxes

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[68] Dymond and Northeast, *A History of Suffolk*, p39.
[69] MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors*, p.19.
[70] T.A. Heslop, Elizabeth Mellings and Margit Thöfner, *Art, Faith and Place in East Anglia: From Prehistory to the Present*, (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2012), p.6.
[71] Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk*, p.4.
[72] Edward Martin, 'Hundreds and Liberties', in Dymond and Martin eds. *Historical Atlas of Suffolk*, p.26.
[73] Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk*, p.4.

were due, the Geldable paid half, and the two liberties combined to pay the other half.[74]

Within these three major liberties of Suffolk were several smaller, feudal liberties centred on the castles of Norman magnates. For example, the Honour of Eye, associated with the Earls and Dukes of Suffolk, had jurisdiction over 72 townships mostly in east Suffolk. The Honour of Clare in the south was combined with extensive estates in Essex, and had been granted in the thirteenth century to the de Clare family against strenuous opposition from Bury abbey.[75] The Honour of the Duke of Norfolk was created in the second half of the fifteenth century, and fifteen of its 139 parishes were in Suffolk, including the castle of the Earls of Norfolk in Bungay and property around Stoke by Nayland in the south of the county.[76] For tenants on these manors, they lived, geographically, in Suffolk, but owed allegiance to Norfolk. This broader 'East Anglian' dynamic was also found elsewhere in the administration of late-medieval Suffolk.

Beyond the Duke of Norfolk's liberty, the Geldable shared a sheriff with Norfolk. With only ten hundreds in the north and east of Suffolk to administrate, his was a minor task.[77] The administrative influence of Norwich and Norfolk over the more southern county also extended to religious matters. From 1094 onwards, nearly all

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[74] Martin, 'Hundreds and Liberties', p.26.
[75] MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors*, p.4.
[76] But not their important castle at Framlingham.
[77] MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors*, p.7.

of Suffolk lay within the Diocese of Norwich.[78] The county was then divided into two- the Archdeaconry of Sudbury covered the western half, and the Archdeaconry of Suffolk covered the eastern half. Therefore, all important ecclesiastical cases and routine administration had to be transacted with reference to "diocesan bureaucracy" in Norwich.[79] However, it appears that late-medieval testators were happy to accept Norfolk and Suffolk as single entity in religious matters. For example, in 1503, John Smyth of Norwich made his will requesting a chantry priest to sing masses, specifying he wanted a priest to be young and honest, of wisdom and reason, and "noon owtlondishman".[80] In this case, "owtlondishman" does not mean a non-Englishman, but a non-*East* Englishman.[81] Smyth would have welcomed a priest from either Norfolk or Suffolk. Again, this is an 'East Anglian' dynamic and it is important that a study of Suffolk does not ignore the influence of Norfolk. Decisions and actions taken in Norwich and elsewhere would impact on the neighbouring southern county. This study, therefore, will include some references to Norfolk evidence. Moreover, as all this demonstrates, Suffolk was a dynamic entity with porous boundaries both in terms of economics, religion and jurisdiction. As the present study will show, the inhabitants of Suffolk also had a dynamic and wide-ranging festive repertoire which, in turn, had a considerable impace on their daily lives.

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[78] Joanna Martin, 'Ecclesiastical Jurisdictions' in Dymond and Martin eds. *An Historical Atlas of Suffolk*, p.24. The exceptions were parishes of Moulton, Hadleigh and Monk's Eleigh which were in the Archbishop of Canterbury's Peculiar of the Deanery of Bocking, and Freckenham, which was in the Peculiar of the Bishop of Rochester.

[79] MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors*, p.7.

[80] Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich, 1370-1532*, Pontifical Institute Studies and Texts no. 66, (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1984), p. 109 in Gibson, *Theater of Devotion*, p.19.

[81] Gibson, *Theater of Devotion*, p.19.

Community

At this point in the argument, it is important also to define the use of the term "community" in this thesis. Regarding rural areas, it is tempting, if not entirely satisfactory, to use the term "parish" as interchangeable with "community". John Coldewey has shown that Suffolk was: "a densely packed network of towns and villages, evenly distributed over the region, with few distinguishable urban centres… the dense population [was] spread out in this tight matrix of communities…"[82] In a geographical sense, it is certainly possible to define each of these communities as a parish; each village in the Suffolk had a single parish church or a daughter chapel. To define community by geography, however, is too limiting. Location alone does not create a community. For Christopher Dyer, "community" can refer to public or co-ordinated activities of a group of individuals, and the shared values and "collective sense of purpose" which underpinned such activities.[83] As will be discussed, all these aspects of community are important to festive culture. Susan Reynolds agrees and, for her, community "is one which defines by engaging in collective activities-activities which are characteristically determined and controlled less by formal regulations than by shared values and norms."[84] Miri Rubin states that a community must reflect a process of social interaction directed at common goals, whilst David

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[82] John C. Coldewey, 'The Non-Cycle Plays and the East Anglian Tradition', in *The Cambridge Companion*, ed. Beadle (1994), p.193.

[83] C. Dyer, 'Taxation and Communities in Late Medieval England', in *Progress and Problems in Medieval England: Essays in Honour of Edward Miller*, ed. R, Brtinell and J. Hatcher, (Cambridge, 1996), p.168, reprinted in Farnhill, *Guilds and the Parish*, p.11.

[84] S.G. Reynolds, *Kingdom and Communities in Western Europe, 900-1300*, (Oxford:1984), p.2 in Farnhill, *Guilds and the Parish*, pp.11-12.

Shaw highlights the need for willing participation of members of the community to meet these goals.[85]

For the purposes of this study, my definition of community draws on all of the above authors but specifically that of Katherine French. She sees community marked out by a broader range of characteristics including but also going beyond than administrative necessities, geographic borders or social similarities.[86] French quotes the author of the fifteenth-century work *Dives and Pauper:* "Singular prayer of one person is good in chamber and oratory and better in church, but common prayer or community in a church is better than singular prayer, for Christ said in the gospel that if two or three are gathered together in his name, that is charity, there he is in the midst of them."[87] Medieval community, then, began in the parish church for pious reasons, such as prayer and mandatory attendance at Mass, and moved outside of that church when parishioners assembled for celebratory occasions and fundraising activities.[88] These types of events created a sense of belonging and a sense of community, the ideal version of which was given in the Bible when Jesus said: "you shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Mark 12:31). This type of community took part in repeated activities with shared goals, interests, concerns and ideals. Members of a community had to be willing to work for the greater whole and its goals, not simply for self interest, and it was coercion from within the group

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[85] Miri Rubin, 'Small Groups, Identity and Solidarity in the Late Middle Ages in *Enterprise and Individuals in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. Jennifer Kermode, (Gloucester: Sutton Press, 1991), pp.134-46; David Gary Shaw, *The Creation of a Community: The City of Wells in the Middle Ages*, (Oxford: OUP, 1993), pp.2-4, repr. in *The People of the Parish Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese*, Katherine L. French, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), p.21.
[86] French, *People of the Parish*, p.22.
[87] P.H. Barnum, ed. *Dives and Pauper*, EETS 275 (1976), quoted in French, *People of the Parish*, p.22.
[88] French, *People of the Parish*, p.22.

that ensured the survival of the community.[89] Exploring how festive culture was both embedded within and instrumental for the survival of the relationship of rural communities is the core purpose of this study.

Structure of the thesis

It bears repeating that this thesis argues against the prevailing scholarly view that festive culture constituted a distinct break from everyday life. Instead, it will demonstrate that festive culture was an important part of the quotidian routine. Accordingly, the first two-thirds of the thesis is structured so as to survey a wide range of pre-Reformatory festive behaviour, covering its organization to its economic significance, its relationship to the landscape, and its impact on personal possessions. That is the purpose of the first four chapters.

Chapter One shows that, whilst many sources of evidence attest to large, communal festive events, which were seemingly times of rest and relaxation, they were not a break from the quotidian for everybody. This is because these events required much organization. To demonstrate this, the chapter will focus on the logistics or mechanics underpinning festivity, its planning and organization. This chapter is foundational for the thesis as a whole, a basis for the following chapters as they fan out from organizational detail into broader themes. The first chapter will also argue that those who took responsibility for festive organization were using the events for important and much needed fundraising. Thus the chapter also introduces a core theme of the thesis: the economics of festive culture and the importance of its

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[89] French, *People of the Parish,* p.42.

commerciality. Then follows a discussion of the ritual of death, showing that the organizers of festive culture not only had a responsibility for the care of the church, but also for others' eternal souls.

Chapter Two, 'Festive Culture and Landscape', is even more economic in its orientation. It focuses on the use of festivity to safeguard rural parishioners' livelihoods. The chapter traces the history of rituals carried out within the landscape to ensure its ongoing fertility. It also examines the impact of festive culture on legal issues concerned with the landscape, and ends by arguing for the ambivalence of festival. Ritual performed upon and through the landscape at some festivals could ratify boundaries and protect rural resources, but other festivals would grant licence to break those boundaries and steal from the same landscape.

Chapter Three, 'Pilgrimage', discusses the movement of people through the landscape as they took part in the ritual of pilgrimage. Again, this chapter, however, focuses on pilgrimage in part from a commercial point of view and discusses how rural Suffolk parishioners took advantage of visiting pilgrims to provide a living. For those trading in accommodation, refreshment or transportation, pilgrims were commodities, important financial assets. This chapter also gives evidence that the same parishioners would have interacted with pilgrims heading to sites of both national and international importance.

Chapter Four, 'The Use of Objects in Festive Culture', argues that personal, everyday objects had a significant role in many aspects of festive culture, particularly those

involved in the rituals of the church. Its core argument is that the function of such objects could change quite dramatically. They might begin as everyday things in the domestic sphere, but would become transformed into objects of great religious and devotional significance. The chapter concludes by showing how these ritual objects could then return to the domestic sphere as their function was transformed yet again.

So together, the first four chapters of the thesis examine a broad range of festive behaviours so as to demonstrate their relationship with the quotidian. The final two chapters of this study are more reflective, more bound into the wider aims of the thesis. They re-evaluate two core aspects of festive culture: the work behind festive culture as entertainment, and festive culture as carnival. Many previous studies have claimed that both aspects made times of festive culture the 'other' to working, everyday life. Chapters Five and Six of this study argue that this is not the case; even the manifestation of festive culture as entertainment or carnivalesque behaviour could, paradoxically, be part of the quotidian. Chapter Five, 'Festive Culture as Entertainment', presents new ways of thinking about the concept that festive culture provided a time of relaxation and enjoyment away from everyday lives. Although evidence shows that pre-Reformation rural parishioners certainly knew how to enjoy themselves during times of festivity, this chapter argues that, for many, these times of entertainments were the basis for all or part of their income. Others found that planning for such occasions was a drain on both their time and their budgets. Times of festivity were, therefore, an ongoing concern and not always

joyous. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the role of sport in the lives of rural parishioners, another release from the toil of everyday life.

 The final chapter, 'Carnival and the carnivalesque' is intended as a contribution to the broader scholarly debate on these concepts, drawing on all aspects of the present study. It begins with a short overview of European carnival behaviour and goes on to identify an allegorical carnivalesque language present in the art, drama and literature of East Anglia at the time. At some festivities, this was used in a controlled way to allow subordinate groups to become, temporarily, the authority, thus acting indeed as a societal "safety-valve". This chapter, however, also argues that, in addition, ordinary people used the idiom of this aspect of festive culture to voice concerns for their everyday lives.

As this thesis will argue, it is not helpful to imagine that late-medieval lives were strictly compartmentalized; instead they were fluid entities. Therefore, even if the pre-Reformation calendar looked like a neat division, the everyday actions of rural parishioners showed his was not the case in practice. Although the festive and the quotidian may look temporally distinct, in reality they merged one into the other into one experiential whole.

Chapter 1- Those that work whilst others play:

the organization of festive culture in rural Suffolk parishes

A common perception of festive culture in the pre-Reformation period is that of a time of relaxation and entertainment, a time apart from the grind of everyday life and daily routines. Records attest to large drinking events accompanied by magnificent feasts and entertainments: dancing, sports, music and plays all enjoyed by parishioners in an atmosphere of communal goodwill. This chapter, however, will argue that times of festivity certainly were not a release from the quotidian and a moment of relaxation for all. Just as today, these events required much organization. The chapter will focus on the mechanics of organization underpinning times of festivity and ceremonial in rural parishes to demonstrate that, whilst most people played, others were working hard to guarantee this enjoyment. Because of this, the organization of festivities would often become a part of some people's everyday lives.

This chapter will argue that the extreme effort put into these festivities was often through financial necessity; festivity was an important tool for essential fundraising for the parish. To highlight the importance of the commerciality of festivity to rural parishes, the chapter will begin with an exploration of financial gatherings before going on to explore the expansion of gatherings into larger and more extravagant communal fundraising events which would raise a larger profit. The larger the spectacle, and the further from everyday experience these events were, the more they were anticipated by the majority of parishioners. However, as will be argued,

this meant far more work for some. The final part of the chapter centres on the ceremonial surrounding death- spectacular events for some but, as an important source of funds for churches, requiring just as much organization. Beyond this, the focus on the mechanics of funerary ceremony will demonstrate that it was not only temporal finances that were dependent upon the organizational skills of a few members of the parish, but the very health of others' eternal souls.

Churchwardens

In the later Middle Ages, festivity and entertainment were an important aspect of parish fundraising, and much surviving evidence for festivity is found in parish and churchwardens' accounts. From this, it can be assumed that much responsibility for the organization of times of festivity was borne by churchwardens. The role of churchwarden evolved from early parishioners' desires in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to keep their communal funds independent of the incumbent. Bequests to parish funds for the upkeep of churches began to be trusted by testators to special lay representatives who, in turn, began to take on duties connected to more than the fabric of the church.[1] These duties ranged from administration of property, employment of services and maintenance of the churchyard, to brewing ale, looking after cattle and bees, and purchasing candles.[2] Churchwardens were expected to live within the parish, and this is true of all churchwardens mentioned in surviving Suffolk accounts with the

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[1] Beat A Kümin, *The Shaping of a Community: The Rise and Reformation of the English Parish c.1400-1560*, (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996), pp.21-22.
[2] Kümin, *Shaping of a Community*, p.23.

exception of Thomas Blower, churchwarden of Mickfield, who lived in the neighbouring parish of Stonham Aspal.[3] Beyond this, they needed 'practical' literacy and numeracy, especially when, as will be discussed, fundraising events using festivity became huge commercial ventures. Not all Suffolk churchwardens wrote their final accounts- the churchwardens of St Mary Bungay paid, regularly, for "the wrytyng of this foresaid receyt[es] & payment[es]"[4]- but they did need to be able to make notes and keep a close eye on income and expenditure. The majority of the fifteenth-century accounts of the coastal parish of Walberswick, which had international trade connections and a healthy income from 'sperlyngfeyre' or fishing dole, are in English.[5] At the other end of the scale, the personal account book of Henry Chestan, a churchwarden of the tiny, rural parish of Thorington, shows he kept all his accounts in excellent Latin.[6] This suggests he had received a thorough, grammar-school education. It was important that reliable tradespeople were employed and good quality commodities obtained at a competitive price, so business skills were desirable in a churchwarden. Henry Chestan was bailiff to local landowner, Geoffrey Weston, and had many useful, transferrable skills to his role.[7]

Churchwardens also needed to be of some substance financially even if they were not wealthy. When an accounting period ended in a deficit, the parish 'owed' the balance to the wardens, implying they had advanced their own money.[8] The

[3] Pauline M. Smith, *The Churchwardens of Mickfield and their Accounts: 1538-1550,* (University of Cambridge, Board of Continuing Education: Certificate in English Local History, 1994), p.35.
[4] SRO(L) 116/E1/1, p.14.
[5] R.W.M. Lewis, ed. *Walberswick Churchwardens' Accounts: AD 1450-1499*, (Privately Published, 1947).
[6] ERO D/DL E55/2.
[7] ERO D/DL E55/2, fols. 12-14.
[8] Kümin, *Shaping of a Community*, p.36.

wardens of Mickfield were substantial yeomen owning goods of between £6 and £22 in the 1540s, though neither amongst the highest nor the lowest subsidy payers.[9] Wills survive for five of Mildenhall's pre-Reformation churchwardens, and they appear to have come from middling status.[10] Mildenhall churchwardens were chosen for three years, and four were elected- more than was usual. This was because two came from the High Town and two from the outlying areas of West Row and Beck Row. It meant well-balanced wardenship in a large parish with a number of isolated hamlets.[11] The early accounts for Boxford show that two churchwardens were elected for one year only. After 1532, one new churchwarden was elected each year to serve with one from the previous year.[12] This ensured continuity, and, perhaps, mixed experience with enthusiasm. No women are mentioned as churchwardens in the surviving pre-Reformation accounts of Suffolk, but they are known to have served in other parts of the country.[13] One woman, 'Widow Stoger', took the lesser leadership role of 'torchreyve' in St Mary's, Bungay.[14] As has been stated, whoever they were, and however they were elected, the main task assigned to churchwardens was to raise enough money to keep the church in a good state of repair, furnished to carry out the necessary liturgy, and to make the church a suitable home for God. One of the major fundraising tools available to rural

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[9] Smith, *The Churchwardens of Mickfield and their Accounts*, p.5.

[10] John Deye left enough money for three trentals and 20s to a guild, whilst John Heynes was wealthy enough to bequeath land to Mildenhall's charnel house. SRO(B) Brydone 68 and 335: John Deye, labourer, Mildenhall; TNA, PCC Ayloffe 19: John Heynes, Mildenhall, 1519 in Judith Middleton-Stewart, 'Parish Activity in Late Medieval Fenland: Accounts and Wills from Tilney All Saints and St Mary's, Mildenhall, 1443-1520' in *The Parish in Late Medieval England*, ed. Clive Burgess and Eamon Duffy, Harlaxton Medieval Studies XIV, (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2006), p.230.

[11] Judith Middleton-Stewart, *Records of the Churchwardens of Mildenhall*, SRS 44, (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2011), p.lix.

[12] Peter Northeast, ed. *Boxford Churchwardens' Accounts: 1530-1561,* SRS XXIII, (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1982).

[13] See Katherine L. French, *The Good Women of the Parish: Gender and Religion after the Black Death*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennysylvania Press, 2008).

[14] SRO(L) 116/E1/1, p.35. For more on this, see below.

churchwardens was festivity; gatherings, entertainments and the ceremonial associated with death.

Gatherings

The simplest method of meeting the demand for a regular stream of income was a gathering, or collection, amongst parishioners. These were organized by churchwardens to bring in cash or commodities, which were then used or sold. The parish of St Mary, Bungay held regular gatherings at Easter, Pentecost, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (the dedication day), All Soul's day and Christmas. In 1526, collections ranged from 3s 8½d to 5s 9d, making an annual income of £1 3s 7d.[15] Collections in most churches were usually conducted on feast days, and donations "may have emerged as a natural equivalent to the rhythm of the seasons".[16] Collections in Mildenhall were organized four times a year and are recorded in the churchwardens' accounts as being made on 'pardon days'.[17] This implies that the donations were given in return for indulgences. Indulgences, or pardons, were granted as a remission from sin instead of the penance or temporal punishment still due to God once the sin had been repented, confessed or forgiven. By the late-middle ages, it was believed that indulgences were applicable to souls in Purgatory, and many people wanted to gain indulgences in order to shorten the time of the souls of their friends or loved ones would spend there.[18] Indulgences were considered an "indispensible incentive" in connection with a variety of fundraising

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[15] SRO(L) 116/E1/1, p.15. £1 3s 7d was the equivalent to around 60 days' pay for a skilled thatcher or nearly 71 days' pay for his mate. Christopher Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Middle Ages: Social Change in England, c.1200-1520,* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993), p.215.
[16] Kümin, *The Shaping of a Community*, p.117.
[17] Middleton-Stewart, *Records of the Churchwardens of Mildenhall*, p.65.
[18] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars,* p.288.

activities.[19] The Mildenhall churchwardens were clearly making the most of these enticements for financial donations. By 1528-29, however, the records of collections in Mildenhall had changed. They were no longer notated as 'pardon days', but simply as 'gatherings' on the same feast days. Perhaps the churchwardens were sensing the start of changes in religious sensibilities, but did not want to disrupt the parishioners' regular pattern of donation. The amounts gathered in 1528-29 were significantly lower,[20] suggesting that the Mildenhall parishioners were less willing to give money without the promise of aid to the souls of loved ones in return.

One popular feast day for gatherings in many rural parishes of Suffolk was Plough Monday. This was the first Monday after Epiphany and, traditionally, was when ploughing began.[21] Accounts from Brundish, Boxford and Long Melford record gatherings on this day.[22] This may have been because Plough Monday was a significant feast for communities with close ties to agriculture, or it may be simply part of the ongoing Christmas festivities. Suffolk churchwardens also used gatherings on feast days as large-scale fundraising activities. After evensong on Whitsunday in 1542, members of the parish of Brundish remained in the church to elect two churchwardens and "promised there gyftes towards the rep[ar]ac[io]n of leadynge of the churche".[23] The amounts were very uniform- 6s 7d, 3s 4d or 12d- as

[19] Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p.289.
[20] Middleton-Stewart, *Records of the Churchwardens of Mildenhall*, pp.76-7.
[21] For more on this see Chapter 2: Festive Culture and the Landscape.
[22] SRO(I) FC 198/A2/1, p.3; Northeast ed., *Boxford Churchwardens' Accounts,* p.58; David Dymond and Clive Paine eds., *The Spoil of Melford: The Reformation in a Suffolk Parish*, (Ipswich: Salient Press, 1992), p.58.
[23] SRO(I) FC 198/A2/1, p.39.

if each parishioner had been assessed as to how much they could afford to give.[24]

This was similar to gatherings in Bridgewater (Somerset) where donated amounts were based, uniformly, on a household's income.[25] The Brundish churchwardens seem also to have adopted this more egalitarian way of supporting the parish.

These Brundish gifts, however, were not enough for necessary church repairs. Therefore, the churchwardens went out and "gatheryde these p[ar]cells hereafter followynge aboute the towne."[26] This raised a further 11s 4d, and the churchwardens also gathered six cheeses which were sold for more profit.[27] For this gathering, those parishioners who felt they were not able to afford cash could give payment in kind. It is not unusual to find gatherings in accounts which are not just of money but other items as well. In 1482/83, the Brundish accounts recorded: "It[e]m iij p[ri]ce of j bushel iij p[ecks] of whete and j q[uar]t[er] j peck of malt gadred of div[ers]e of the p[ar]isshen[er]s the same plowmoneday."[28] The previous entry suggests that those who were unable to donate wheat or malt gave 4s 3d instead, showing that the churchwardens had requested wheat and malt as part of this donation.[29] A slightly later entry records how the churchwardens used these donations: "And received of a church ale with j b[u]s[h]e[ll] iij p[ecks] of whete and iiij b[u]s[hells] of malt of the said toun[e] stuff baken and brewen to the same vijs

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[24] 3s was the amount that the Cratfield churchwardens paid a plumber for one week's work at the time. 12d, therefore, was about two days' pay for a plumber. Revd William Holland, *Cratfield Parish Papers: A Transcript of the Accounts of the Parish, from AD 1490 to AD 1642, with Notes*, (London: Jarrold and Sons, 1895), p.22. There are suggestions that some gatherings were perceived as a tax. In the Mildenhall collection accounts of 1454 an entry reads: "Item from the remaining taxes 8d". Middleton-Stewart, *Records of the Churchwardens of Mildenhall*, p.37.

[25] French, *The People of the Parish,* p.115.

[26] SRO(I) FC 198/A2/1, p.40.

[27] SRO(I) FC 198/A2/1, p.40.

[28] SRO(I) FC 198/A2/1, p.7.

[29] SRO(I) FC 198/A2/1, p.7.

iijd."[30] The churchwardens had used the donations to brew ale for a communal drinking. Brundish churchwardens, therefore, were not solely reliant on financial gatherings alone, and used them to source commodities needed for other, more enjoyable fundraising events. The Mildenhall churchwardens did the same. Furthermore, their records show that it was not always churchwardens who were responsible for organizing parish fundraising events, and that, in many cases, forms of entertainment were used at these events.[31] The use of entertainment and festivity in fundraising were more effective than gatherings alone. They were "more than inducements to coerce payment", and they assembled a community for a time of enjoyment and merrymaking. In this way, parish fundraising could be both a religious and social experience.[32] However, whilst many Suffolk churchwardens' accounts attest to times of entertainment that were opportunities for relaxation and a break from the quotidian for many, they are also evidence for the huge amount of work that churchwardens and others would need to carry out in order to make them a financial success for the parish.

Ales

One of the most popular types of fundraising with entertainment, churchales, are present in all surviving sets of rural Suffolk churchwardens' accounts. Many parishes held more than one a year and, as the parishioners often donated the ingredients needed for brewing ale, they provided a steady income. During 1486-89, the Brundish churchwardens held five ales "with whete and malte suche as was yeven to

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[30] SRO(I) FC 198/A2/1, p.7.
[31] See, for example, Middleton-Stewart, *Records of the Churchwardens of Mildenhall*, pp.32, 33, 44.
[32] French, *People of the Parish*, p.117.

the Churche by the p[ar]isshon[er]s".[33] Plough Monday was a regular feast day for church ales in Brundish, as well as the Sunday before St Mary Magdalene, and the Sunday after Epiphany.[34] Between 1517-18 the Brundish ales were known as "drinkings", the second of which was probably held during the summer and was very profitable, raising 41s 9½d, eight times the amount raised at the second most profitable ale.[35] French has summed up the link between community enjoyment and fundraising as "people who worshipped together drank and socialized together",[36] and Suffolk churchwardens clearly recognized that fundraising for pious purposes was far more successful if parishioners were given a reason to relax and enjoy themselves amongst friends.

In 1520-21, however, the Brundish churchwardens needed a serious amount of fundraising for church repairs. They took on the responsibility of providing food alongside the drinking. To this they committed 9s 5d, including payment for two sheep and a calf (and spits on which to roast them), sewet and eggs.[37] Between 1541-42, more money was needed, and the churchwardens again organized a churchale with a feast. This time, they invited seven neighbouring parishes, the parishioners of which travelled to Brundish to enjoy the fun, donating 25s 11d between them.[38] The churchwardens of Huntingfield employed similar actions to those of Brundish. Their ales began with donations of wheat and malt for a drinking,

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[33] SRO(I) FC 198/A2/1, p.14.
[34] SRO(I) FC 198/A2/1, pp.14, 18, 20, 22; p.21; p.21.
[35] SRO(I) FC 198/A2/1, p.30.
[36] French, *People of the Parish*, p.134.
[37] SRO(I) FC 198/A2/1, pp.32-33.
[38] SRO(I) FC 198/A2/1, p.37.

which subsequently expanded into feasting.[39] At a Huntingfield ale of 1536, seven

neighbouring parishes were invited, and the profits increased by 13s 7d, a more than

fifty percent rise.[40] The inclusion of other parishes at fundraising entertainments not

only made financial sense for small rural parishes who only had limited resources to

call upon, and so that expenses were shared, but it also fostered good relations

between the parishes, and encouraged help in times of need. A single sheet

compiled with the Brundish churchwardens accounts is a contract between the

Brundish churchwardens and the churchwardens of neighbouring Taddington:

> M[emoran]dum upon Hallowmes day in the xxxiiijth yere of ou[r] soverign
>
> lorde kynge henry theyght the churchrevys of Brundishe Reynolde Gybbon &
>
> Roger Wade have borrowyd of the towneshipe of Tadyngeton for the ledynge
>
> of Brundishe churche five hondreth & xxxvj pounds of lede delivyd by the
>
> hands of Master Aylmar & John Rafe church ryves of Tadyngtone & weyde in
>
> the p[re]sens of Will[ia]m [damaged] & the seyd John Rafe to be delivered
>
> ageyne at any tyme wit[hi]n a monith warynynge by the churchryves of the
>
> sayd township.[41]

Taddington was one of the parishes who had attended the Brundish churchale and

donated money.[42] The link established between the two parishes through joint

entertainment and festivity enabled the churchwardens of Brundish to approach the

Taddington churchwardens for aid in an emergency.[43]

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[39] SRO(I) FC 57/A1/1, pp.1, 37.
[40] SRO(I) FC 57/A1/1, p.50.
[41] SRO(I) FC 57/A1/1, p.36.
[42] SRO(I) FC 57/A1/1, p.37.
[43] For more on inter-parochial relationships at times of festivity, see Chapter 5: Festive Culture as Entertainment.

Churchales were very often the responsibility of churchwardens, and accounts are full of entries such as that of Boxford in 1541: "It[e]m ressevyd off an ale made by the Chyrchwardeyns vjs viijd".[44] In this parish, however, it appears that the organization of an ale may have been a test of ability for future churchwardens. In 1532, for example, Thomas Hethe and Walter Gosnoll were elected as churchwardens. In the previous year they had organized an ale together alongside Thomas Sugge.[45] In 1534, John Colman and John Gawge were elected. In 1533, John Colman arranged an ale with John Whytyng, whilst Gawge did the same with John Skot.[46] These small-scale ales would have showed the prospective churchwardens' abilities in organization and finance, and assessed their suitability for larger responsibilities. In 1531, William Coo gave "a vayle for the chansel ynstead of an ale gefte to the chorche clerely price xs."[47] This suggests that ale-making was obligatory, and that there was a fine or an expectation of compensation for not doing so.[48] Coo was not elected churchwarden the following year, but was elected in 1535.[49] In the previous year he had organized an ale with Peter Bronde thus eventually proving himself.[50]

The majority of entries regarding ales in churchwardens' accounts refer to income only, and are not followed by detailed expenditure such as those of Brundish and Huntingfield. This could suggest that most ales were not organized by

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[44] Northeast ed., *Boxford Churchwardens' Accounts*, p.35.
[45] Northeast ed., *Boxford Churchwardens' Accounts*, pp.6 & 4.
[46] Northeast ed., *Boxford Churchwardens' Accounts*, pp.13 & 10.
[47] Northeast ed., *Boxford Churchwardens' Accounts*, p.6.
[48] Northeast ed., *Boxford Churchwardens' Accounts*, p.xii.
[49] Northeast ed., *Boxford Churchwardens' Accounts*, p.10.
[50] Northeast ed., *Boxford Churchwardens' Accounts*, p.13

churchwardens themselves but that they simply received the income from an ale organized by someone else. Churchwardens were not, therefore, working on their own to raise money for the church. The Boxford evidence supports this as, each year, as well as an ale organized by the churchwardens themselves, four or five ales were organized by other prominent men of the parish. In the accounts of 1537, for example, the income from six ales are bracketed together.[51] The Mildenhall accounts show that the churchwardens received income from regular ales organized by parishioners from different hamlets of the parish. For example, in 1446 a churchale at Halywell raised £1 11s 4d, whilst, in 1447, a churchale "from the Westrowe" raised £1.[52] The records of 1449, a collaborative effort between the parishioners of the Bek, Cakestrete and Wildestrete made £1 3s.[53] A similar structure took place in Yatton (Somerset). Like Mildenhall, it is a large parish, and it hosted three ales a year at Whitsun, Hocktide and Midsummer, each sponsored by one of three hamlets in the parish. In both parishes the responsibility for fundraising was taken on by each of three areas of the parish in turn. As parishioners from the other areas would attend these entertainments, the fundraising helped integrate a large parish. A sizeable population also ensured good profits on a regular basis.[54]

Ales could also be part of the ceremonial of remembrance. The Suffolk will of John Sherman proved in 1465 states: "I wishe to have a church ale in Yaxley church."[55] Peter Stoham of Thorndon bequeathed four bushels of malt and 2 bushels of wheat

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[51] Northeast ed., *Boxford Churchwardens' Accounts*, p.30.
[52] Middleton-Stewart, *Records of the Churchwardens of Mildenhall*, pp. 2, 7.
[53] Middleton-Stewart, *Records of the Churchwardens of Mildenhall*, p.10.
[54] French, *People of the Parish*, p.135.
[55] Peter Northeast and Heather Falvey eds., *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury, 1439-1474: Wills from the Register 'Baldwyne', Part II: 1461-1474*, SRS LIII, (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010), p.145(244).

for an ale the profits of which were to go to the church.[56]   The intention of these testators was to encourage prayer for their souls from those who enjoyed the ales. They had experienced the bonhomie of ales whilst alive and wanted to use it to aid the journey of their soul through Purgatory.   Their executors organized these commorative ales and passed the profits onto the churchwardens.[57] Accounts, therefore, include entries such as "Memo[randum] this is what is in the hands of the Rector for the drinking of Richard Collarde iijs" and "Item from Margaret Weston for the drinking of Robert Weston iijs iiijd".[58] Through actions such as these, proceeds raised through entertainment put on as a pious request is given to a church to be used for other reasons.

Games

A further inducement to attend a fundraising ale was the inclusion of entertainment paid for by the organizers.   Very often, the entertainment would be a play. Described frequently in accounts as a 'game', these were large undertakings usually for a one-off fundraising event and, like the Brundish and Cratfield ales, they were inter-parochial.   'Bann-criers' were sent out in advance to nearby parishes to advertise the game; the Long Melford churchwardens paid "To Hammont for proclamyng the Games at Brantre (Braintree, Essex), and to Peter for proclamyng that at Ypwyche (Ipswich)."[59]   Advertisements to other parishes meant that, sometimes, churchwardens were able to raise a subscription in advance, thus

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[56] Northeast and Falvey eds., *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury*, p.462(764).
[57] For more on this see below.
[58] ERO D/DL E55/2, fols. 14, 4.
[59] Dymond and Paine eds., *The Spoil of Melford*, p.63. For more on the banns of the *Play of the Sacrament* see below, Chapter 5: Festive Culture as Entertainment.

providing working capital.[60] In 1535, the churchwardens of Boxford organized a play in order to raise money to repair the church porch and tower.   This was an astonishing feat of inter-parochial co-operation as the churchwardens coordinated 33 collectors raising donations from 28 parishes, including money sent from the Countess of Oxford's household in the neighbouring parish of Polstead. Before expenses, the play took the phenomenal sum of £19 17s 9d.[61] There are no accompanying expenses for food and drink as the parishioners themselves were responsible for this.[62] There are also no records of payments for expenses of the play itself, except for a payment to players. This may be due to the employment of a "propyrte player" who was, presumably, a professional director, stage manager and producer all rolled into one.[63] He may have shouldered the working costs of the play himself as he received a generous allowance of 30s, sixty times the average daily wage for a labourer.[64] Benet Kyng, who may have been the property player for Bungay's games, only received five and six shillings in 1566 and 1568 respectively.[65] This suggests that the Boxford property player had been given a sum by the churchwardens which included his own payment and the play expenses.

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[60] Metfield's subscription to the Bungay game of 1509-10 was 11d. SRO(I) FC 91/E5/7, fol.1.

[61] Northeast ed., *Boxford Churchwardens' Accounts*, p.18. MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors*, p.55. This was the equivalent of nearly two-thirds of the annual fixed rental income owed to the Duke of Norfolk in his extremely prosperous manor at nearby Framlingham. Alternatively, this amount would have purchased 37, 224 eggs at a Suffolk market. At today's supermarket prices, 37,224 eggs of a similar quality would cost £14,631.44.   John Ridgard, ed. *Great Framlingham in Suffolk and the Howard Dukes of Norfolk*, (Blaxhall: The Blaxhall Press, 2009), pp.63 & 56; http://www.waitrose.com/shop/ Retrieved 14/11/13.

[62] "And it is to be remembyrd that all the persons of the towne beforeseid, which brought in money to the profight of the pley, dyd Fynde all the towneshippes mete & drynk at ther proper Cost & charge withowt any maner of alowans to them made for any maner of charge…". Northeast ed., *Boxford Churchwardens' Accounts*, p.19.

[63] John C. Coldewey, 'The Non-Cycle Plays and the East Anglian Tradition', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, eds. Beadle and Fletcher, p.226.

[64] Northeast ed., *Boxford Churchwardens' Accounts*, p.19.

[65] SRO(L) 115/E1/1, pp.39, 47.

The Bungay accounts for plays produced in the mid-sixteenth century highlight the fact that whilst other members of the parish enjoyed the festivity and entertainment of a communal play, the churchwardens were coordinating an astonishing amount of organizational detail.[66] Behind the scenes they organized and prepared enormous amounts of food and drink. In 1568, the costs of these alone came to £12 0s 1d, four fifths of the total expenditure. The churchwardens also ensured that these huge quantities of consumables were served in a safe and straightforward way.[67] They also administered to the play itself, taking on responsibilities for the actors, scripts, the stage, props and costumes.[68] As East Anglian drama was known for its spectacle, the Bungay churchwardens also paid for stage effects, purchasing four pounds of gunpowder. Later, they realized this was not enough and paid for another two pounds.[69] Because of this careful organizational detail by the churchwardens, the Bungay play of 1568 took £22 8s 5½d. Even with its huge payments for food and drink, the churchwardens made a profit of £7 3s, more than half the total income of the church in the previous year.[70] The churchwardens' job, however, was to make money for the church, not to squander it. They took some risk out of these enormous fundraising efforts by hiring personnel such as the property player and receiving donations of necessary commodities. Such precautions paid off. The records of the Boxford 1535 play state:

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[66] SRO(L) 115/E1/1, pp.44-50.
[67] SRO(L) 115/E1/1, p. 44. Booths for the serving of food and drink were erected and taken down. SRO(L) 115/E1/1, pp.44, 34.
[68] SRO(L) 115/E1/1, pp.32, 34, 39, 47, 50.
[69] SRO(L) 115/E1/1, p.47. Their other responsibilities included transport of costumes and props, security, and replacing lost and broken items including pots and a fan. They also had to repair some of the church windows broken during the game. SRO(L) 115/E1/1, pp. 8, 32, 34, 39, 43, 44, 47, 51.
[70] SRO(L) 115/E1/1, pp. 43, 51. In 1566, the churchwardens did not organize any 'extraordinary' fundraising events. SRO(L) 115/E1/1, p.37.

by which meanys there is no maner of alowans owt of this pley but onely xxxs

to the propyrte player and xvs to diverse players which cam owt of strange

placys / So that there was made of the same pley clerely to the profyght of

the churche xviijli xixs v ob.[71]

Churchwardens also appear to have taken no interest in the content of the play itself.

They may have requested a play suitable for an occasion, such as the Mildenhall "play

off Sent Thomas" on St Thomas' day, 1505,[72] otherwise the event is only ever referred

to as "the playe', "the interlude" or "the game". Possibly, the theme and content of

the play was left to the players or the property player. The churchwardens may have

seen the games essentially as fundraising events which required a lot of organization.

Women in Games and Ales

Although there are no surviving records of female churchwardens before the

Reformation in Suffolk, this did not mean that women were not involved in the

organization of parish life and festivities. In other parts of the country women took

on 'lesser' parish roles, and sometimes went on to become churchwardens.   In

Tintinhull (Somerset), Isabel Wilmot and Margaret Stacy were ale wardens for St

Margaret's ale.[73] In 1514 at St Margaret's, Westminster, the parish was engaged in

extensive rebuilding, and Rosemund Hall worked with her husband as a parish

collector.[74] In many cases, women took on parish responsibility when they became

widows and their legal status changed.   The Suffolk evidence agrees with this.

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[71] Northeast ed., *Boxford Churchwardens' Accounts*, p.19.
[72] Middleton-Stewart, *Records of the Churchwardens of Mildenhall*, p.44.
[73] SRO D/P/tin 4/1/1 f.26 in Katherine French, 'Women Churchwardens in Late Medieval England' in Burgess and Duffy eds., *The Parish in Late Medieval Life*, p.306.
[74] Westminster City archives E1(1514) in French, 'Women Churchwardens', p.306.

'Wydow Stroger' may have taken on the responsibility of torchreve at St Mary's, Bungay as it was a position that was to have been her husband's. For this reason, she saw it either as a family honour that needed to be preserved or a communal responsibility to be fulfilled.[75] Widows could assume householder obligations and this is noticeable in the Suffolk gathering accounts. 'Wydowe Browne', 'Wydowe Kynge' and 'Wydowe Wade' donate to Brundish's 1542 gathering, widows Browne and Kynge donating further in remembrance of their husbands.[76] In Huntingfield, five widows made donations which were both financial or ingredients for churchales.[77]

There were also opportunities for younger women to get involved in parish gatherings and to take on parish responsibilities. Both Brundish and Mildenhall had parish events which were organized by young men and women. The Brundish accounts record regular collections such as: "It[e]m r[eceived] the same plow[Monday] and also an oth[ere] plowmonday in money gadred of div[er]s yong folks of the p[ar]isshe iiijs x ob".[78] During 1446 in Mildenhall, young men and women raised £1 15s through a churchale.[79] Not only did these fundraising efforts give young people experience of organizing events and managing money, they also allowed them to work and socialize together in a manner in which their elders would have approved. Contributing to a parish fundraising event or entertainment was a pious action but it may also have improved prospects for marriage. In addition, wives formed single-sex groups which contributed to the parish. In Walberswick in 1497, a

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[75] SRO(L) 115/E1/1, p.35. French, 'Women Churchwardens', p.311.
[76] SRO(I) FC 57/A1/1, p.38.
[77] SRO(I) FC 198/A2/1, pp.1, 2, 58, 59.
[78] SRO(I) FC 57/A1/1, p.3.
[79] Middleton-Stewart, *Records of the Churchwardens of Mildenhall*, p.4.

wives' group raised 10s through gathering for a glass window for the church.[80] Again, this gave wives valuable experience of working together towards a common goal and they could also take collective ownership for a parish project.[81] Individual women also contributed to churchales. "Mother Spinit" was paid for bultyng [sifting wheat] and helping at Huntingfield ale.[82] Four wives provided cream for various ales in Bungay,[83] and, in Long Melford, 11d was paid by the churchwardens to "Sparrowe's wyff for making of cake and appulcake against the Ale keppt in Lent."[84]

In two Suffolk parishes, women took on considerable responsibility for the finance of parish entertainments and festivities. In Boxford during 1535, a widow again took over responsibility from her husband. John Laughlyn's widow collected 12s towards the game from the parish of Polstead.[85] Bungay appears to have had a wives' guild like that of Walberswick and, in 1567, "ye wiff[es] gathering" raised 31s for the game, over two-thirds of the total income.[86] In 1568 twelve wives were listed alongside the individual amounts they raised "in hyr purse".[87] It is to be noted that all these women are described as someone's wife and never by their Christian names. Could it be that the wives put in the effort to make the collections, whilst their husbands took the responsibility of handing over the purses to the churchwardens? The evidence does suggest that times of fundraising and entertainment within the parish allowed women to assume influential positions

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[80] Lewis, ed. *Walberswick Churchwardens' Accounts*, p.256.
[81] For more on this see below, Chapter 4: Objects and Festive Culture.
[82] SRO(I) FC 198/A2/1, p.26.
[83] SRO(L) 115/E1/1, pp. 37, 47, 50.
[84] Dymond and Paine, eds., *The Spoil of Melford*, p.62.
[85] Northeast ed., *Boxford Churchwardens' Accounts*, p.18.
[86] Northeast ed., *Boxford Churchwardens' Accounts*, p.37.
[87] Northeast ed., *Boxford Churchwardens' Accounts*, pp. 42,43.

through organization, and even some leadership roles.[88] However, as Stokes has observed, whilst the parish records of Suffolk document the ubiquitous participation of women in festivity and entertainment, they do not treat participation as something exceptional but as an ordinary fact of life.[89]

Funerals and Anniversaries

Another, more formal event which took place in church was the performance of ceremonial following a death. These could be some of the most spectacular events of the year within a parish, and were a good source of income for the church. As an important fundraiser, this ceremonial required just as much organization as ales and games, and churchwardens accounts are full of entries such as Thomas Wryght's 1538/39 bequest of 26s 8d to St Mary's, Bungay.[90] Such was the importance that people placed on the health of their eternal souls, and that ceremonial held on the late medieval mind, careful plans were made for funerals and remembrance in wills. This specific organizational detail needed to be fulfilled by others. It may be perceived that the ritual of death was performed by priests with the laity only participating during the funeral and burial. However, surviving evidence attests that the organization of the ceremonial surrounding death involved many members of a community and took place across a much wider period of time.

The ceremonial began straight after death as the body was prepared for burial. At this point, women were often the first to perform ritual activities. In 1514, Alice

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[88] French, 'Women Churchwardens', p.321.
[89] James Stokes, 'Women and Performance in Medieval and Early Modern Suffolk', *Early Theatre* 15.1 (2012), p.34.
[90] SRO(L) 116/E1/1, p.35.

Bumpstead of Bury St Edmunds paid 2d to each of "two women that shall sew my winding sheet."[91] In Thorington, Cristine Waryn, Margaret Brooker and Catherine Woodcok were paid to wash and lay out the body of Geoffrey Weston.[92] The laying out of the body was seen very much as women's work. A wall painting in Trotton Church (Sussex) associates one of the Seven Corporal Acts of Mercy, which were the acknowledged duty of all Christians, with women. Instead of burial of the dead, which was usually associated with men, it depicts laying out of the body. Two or three women surround a body, washing it, whilst the priest sprinkles holy water with his asperges.[93] The body was then carried to church where the ceremony continued.

Once in church, the body, which was usually in a coffin, was displayed on a hearse. Both the hearse and the coffin were part of the parish furniture. In 1510/11, the Mildenhall churchwardens paid 1s 8d "for the cofyn making",[94] and in Long Melford, the churchwardens paid Harry Boram 8d to make a new hearse.[95] With this commission, Boram was making an income by providing for funerary ceremonial. The hearse was usually covered by a pall or hearse cloth which, again, was part of the parish equipment. Sometimes a testator made a special request; Christian Caas of Sizewell asked for "the best covering that belongeth to my bed for a herse cloth or bier cloth."[96] This individuality may have caused mourners to remember the funeral,

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[91] Christopher Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England 1066-1550*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p.43.
[92] ERO D/DL E55/2, fol.10.
[93] French, *Good Women of the Parish*, p.192.
[94] Middleton-Stewart, *Records of the Churchwardens of Mildenhall*, p.59.
[95] Dymond and Paine eds., *The Spoil of Melford*, p.64.
[96] SRO(I) IC/AA2/6/12, Christian Caas, Sizewell, 1526, in Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour*, p.138.

and to offer more fervent prayers for the ongoing health of Caas' soul.[97] The hearse was also surrounded by candles or tapers, and testators such as Ed'dill Hoo of Stowmarket requested "candles burning about my body" in their wills.[98] Richard Barbore of Clare, asked for the candles about his hearse to be used further in his ongoing remembrance, affording his soul more prayers: "12lb of wax with all other stuff necessary for making 3 small torches to be held about my body on the day of burial at my seven-day and my thirty-day, and [afterwards] these 3 torches to go the 3 altars of that church, to burn at the same time as the elevation of the host as long as they last."[99] With this request, Richard Barbore was ensuring that his memory would enter into the minds of other parishioners at the high point of the mass when all eyes would be on the host and his candles. He could not have desired a more effective moment to remind people to pray for his soul.[100] Prudent churchwardens, however, could see how to make an income for these lights. They received payment for candles if they had supplied them, and could also make money from their residue; the Long Melford churchwardens received 1s 8d from "waste of the church waxe burnt at the widow Elyss buryall."[101] Churchwardens were well aware of the importance of this ritual for the souls of the departed, but they were also aware that one of their main responsibilities was making a financial income to ensure the upkeep of the house of God.

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[97] Daniell, *Death and Burial*, p.47.
[98] Northeast and Falvey eds., *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury*, p.397 (665).
[99] Northeast and Falvey eds., *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury*, p.25 (46).
[100] For more on this see below, Chapter 4: Objects and Festive Culture.
[101] SRO(L) 115/E1/1, p.5; Dymond and Paine eds., *The Spoil of Melford*, p.58.

Once the Mass for the Dead had been performed, burial took place. This was another source of income for churchwardens, and 6s 8d seems to have been standard for burial.[102] Costs for burial also features in wills, and Robert Sparrow of Long Melford remembered "the sacrist of the said church…for digging my grave."[103] It was very important for the deceased to have a good send-off; their social position could be assessed by the number of mourners, the sound of bells and the testator's generosity.[104] The presence of the poor at the funeral was also very important. Their humble status meant that their prayers for the deceased were especially beneficial.[105] The inclusion of paupers in a funeral signified the testator's final charitable act in this world and was another inducement to prayer.[106] Those who took on the responsibility of organizing funerals and burial had to ensure that they fulfilled requests in wills such as "to each poor man coming to my burial 1s" or "to each needy poor person there, to pray for my soul, 1d."[107] Richard Oldring of Wangford knew that some inducement to attend his burial was needed, leaving 6s to the poor of Blythburgh, Wangford, Reydon and Southwold "to the intent that they shall not labour out of town on my burial day."[108] The poor could expect not only a dole in return for their prayers, but also food as a further inducement for attendance. The acts of feeding the hungry and giving drink to the thirsty were

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[102] Middleton-Stewart, *Records of the Churchwardens of Mildenhall*, p.48 (1506-07); Northeast ed., *Boxford Churchwardens' Accounts*, p.38 (1542).

[103] Northeast and Falvey eds., *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury*, p.473 (779).

[104] The sound of bells indicated that someone was dead, encouraging others to pray for the soul. Bells were also supposed to frighten off devils which might be attacking the eternal soul. Daniell, *Death and Burial*, pp. 51-153. See also Chapter 2: Festive Culture and the Landscape.

[105] Daniell, *Death and Burial*, p.51.

[106] Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour*, p.117.

[107] Thomas Cros, Edwardstone, 1462, Northeast and Falvey eds., *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury*, p. 78 (133); Agnes Dyke, Stoke by Clare, 1477, Northeast and Falvey eds., *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury*. p.491 (803).

[108] SRO(I) IC AA2/13/197, Robert Oldring, Wangford, 1539, in Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour*, p.118.

other Corporal Acts of Mercy, and testators provided for them in their wills. Margaret Trappett was specific about the food she wished to be available at her funeral: "everyone coming then both to do obsequie and mass, to have white bread and cheese, together with ale and other food appropriate to the time."[109] Thomas Sampson of Sizewell specified that "iij combe wheat ffyve Barells of Bere v shepe to be bakyn into pastys that the poore people may be refreshed theywyth."[110] A good feast also encouraged remembrance of the deceased and more prayers for their soul.

The person or persons who took on the task of ensuring that the organizational detail of the funeral and the wishes of the deceased were carried out was the executor. At the very least, executors had to make sure that the costs for the ceremonial and burial were met from the deceased's estate, and that the final wishes for the funeral were achieved as far as possible. The ancillary documentation for the funeral of Geoffrey Weston from the Suffolk parish of Thorington still exists in the accounts book of Henry Chestan, his bailiff and executor.[111] Geoffrey's will does not survive and this book is evidence for the actual payments for his funeral, rather than Geoffrey's wishes. It is the real mechanics of its organization. Henry's responsibilities included paying for washing and laying out the body, obsequies, "ringing and making the grave" and alms for the poor. The biggest single expense was food and drink for the wake.[112] Churchwardens also took some of the excutors'

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[109] Northeast and Falvey eds., *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury*, p.159 (268).
[110] SRO(I) IC/AA2/13/333, Thomas Sampson, Sizewell, 1540, in Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour*, p.117.
[111] ERO D/DL E55/2.
[112] ERO D/DL E55/2, fol. 10.

responsibility of organization for funerals. The Metfield churchwardens recorded: "It[em] to vij poore folkys for John Foxe viijd" and, following the death of Awsteyn Levy, the Bungay St Mary churchwardens paid for preists and clerks, to ensure the presence of three poor men, and to "the sexten for ryngyng."[113] It appears that the visual of this funerary ceremonial was as important as the words that were spoken and the actions that were performed by the priests. Mourners needed to remember the funeral in order to continue praying for the deceased's soul. For this reason, the executors and others concerned with the organization of the funeral took on as much, if not more, responsibility for the health of the deceased's soul as the religious personnel present.

The care for the health of the soul through prayer did not stop after the burial, and it was often followed by a period of intense activity. Many believed that a great number of Masses should be said soon after a death, and services were carried out seven days and a month after, as the soul was seen as still lingering in the vicinity for thirty days after burial.[114] Again, evidence suggests that executors and churchwardens had the job of ensuring that appropriate remembrance took place and that the deceased's wishes for their remembrance was fulfilled. A funeral was considered to be the burial, seven-day and 'month's mind', and testators were careful to include instructions for these in their wills. John Barkere of Cowlinge was keen to ensure that all three could be paid for when he stated "that all costs of my burial, my seven-day and thirty-day shall be borne by my own grain and chattels,

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[113] SRO(I) FC91/E5/7, fol. 1; SRO(L) 116/E1/1, p.18.
[114] Daniell, *Death and Burial*, pp. 61, 62.

with a mother cow and pig."[115] Testators also requested that their executors continued to remember both charity and the Corporal Acts of Mercy in their name and Thomas Alston wanted 100s to be distributed amongst the poor on his seven-day, whilst Robert Dench of Mendlesham bequeathed to his executors "sufficient cheese for my thirty-day."[116]

Twelve months after death, executors organized the celebration of the deceased's anniversary. This was also known as a 'yearday' or 'obit'. Obits were essentially a re-enactment of the funeral with accompanying prayers for the health of the soul, and could be requested in wills for any number of years. Finance, of course, was an essential requirement for this ongoing remembrance, and testators made requests such as that of John Drawswerd who left an acre of land to his wife on condition that she "keeps or sees kept in the future my anniversary [and the anniversaries of] my parents John and Marion, my brother Richard and his wife Emmot, on 14th November each year in the future."[117] As obits were important sources of income for the church, churchwardens were very involved in the organization of the ceremonial surrounding them. The churchwardens' accounts of St Mary's, Bungay are a good example of this involvement and, like many other sets of accounts from across England, are full of entries such as "It[e]m rec[eived] at the obite of Katheryne Sponer[er] iijs iiijd."[118] The Bungay churchwardens also paid out for the organization of obits. Entries include "It[e]m payde to ye obyte of Thomas Chapelyn xixd" and

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[115] Northeast and Falvey eds., *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury*, p.290 (490).

[116] Northeast and Falvey eds., *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury*, p.172 (290); Northeast and Falvey eds., *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury*, p.220 (374).

[117] Northeast and Falvey eds., *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury*, p.505 (824).

[118] SRO(L) 116/E1/1, p.18.

"It[e]m payde for ij obytt[es] & to ye bellman".[119] Presumably, these costs were funded from the deceased's bequests. The obit of Mawte (?Maud) Dernforth, which began in 1523, was organized by the churchwardens and celebrated every Holy Thursday evening for eighteen years.[120] Testators were concerned that churchwardens planned their remembrance ceremonial as carefully as their funerary ceremonial. Walter Pers of Kelsale, for example, carefully laid out the practical requirements for his obit: "4d to the ringers- residue to making the hearse and to the poor. Tapers and lights supplied from the bequest."[121]

Henry Chestan's account book shows that it was not just churchwardens who were organizing anniversaries. As executor, he took on responsibility for the obits of Geoffrey and his wife, Alice.[122] This documentation, however, demonstrates that, contrary to the wishes of many testators, expenditure on obits diminished each year and, therefore, the ceremonial lessened. On the first anniversary of Geoffrey's death, Henry spent 13s 7½d- 12d on priests and clerks, 17½d on candles, 2½d on the poor, and 7s 17d on food including bread, cheese, meat, malt and spices.[123] Two years later, on the anniversary of both Geoffrey and his wife, the food included geese and a pig, but the payment to the priests and clerks diminished to 6d.[124] The following year, payments for both food and religious personnel had significantly

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[119] SRO(L) 116/E1/1, p.18.
[120] SRO(L) 116/E1/1, pp. 4, 8, 18,21, 27, 30.
[121] NRO NCC Wright 12, Walter Pers, Kelsale, 1498, in Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour*, p. 137.
[122] Although Henry may have been churchwarden of Thorington church at the time. See ERO D/DL E55/2, fol. 4.
[123] ERO D/DL E55/2, fol. 11.
[124] ERO D/DL E55/2, fol.13.

reduced.[125] Middleton-Stewart has observed that Henry's account book "may reflect an obit not sufficiently healthy to last even seven years."[126] Testators may have had intentions such as those of Kathryn Croxton of Dunwich who requested a 99 year obit.[127] Henry's account book, however, shows that ongoing remembrance ceremonial and, therefore, the progress of the soul towards heaven, was highly dependent on economic situations on earth.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the organizational mechanics behind times of festivity in rural Suffolk. The majority of evidence for festive culture in rural parishes suggests that churchwardens used communal entertainments and festivities to raise money to fulfill church needs. Because of this, they took great care in ensuring their fundraising efforts were as effective as possible. Churchwardens recognized that although the donation of money for the upkeep and embellishment of the church was a pious action and beneficial to one's soul in the future, parishioners were most generous if they received an immediate return. Indulgences would help the souls of their loved ones through Purgatory, whilst drinking and feasts provided a time of society and relaxation with friends in a convivial atmosphere. Churchwardens were also aware that the biggest money-spinners, however, were games, and ensured that these times of entertainment provided parishioners with a feast, copious amounts of drink, and spectacular entertainments.

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[125] ERO D/DL E55/2, fol.14.
[126] Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour*, p.139.
[127] SRO(I) IC/AA2/9/149, Kathryn Croxton, Dunwich, 1523, in Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour*, p.138.

As the main purpose for their role was to raise money for the upkeep of the church, churchwardens were taken up with the organizational detail of an ale or game whilst others enjoyed themselves. They coordinated huge outgoings for food, drink and entertainment, whilst documenting the minutiae of the event, and employing resources to make sure the income was as large as possible. This organization would, by necessity, have been in the planning for months in advance, becoming part of the churchwardens' daily lives. Games and ales, therefore, were not a break from the quotidian for the organizers. Churchwardens were also aware that the money they were handling belonged, essentially, to the church and, by extension, to God. They were careful not to squander it, and used money-making schemes such as donations of food and drink and the employment of professionals to co-ordinate the entertainment. Furthermore, festivity could be used as a testing ground for prospective churchwardens. Those wishing to become the caretaker of God's house had to, first, prove themselves through the organization of a small-scale event before taking office and the responsibility for larger affairs involving thousands of pounds of today's money.

Those organizing festivities and communal ceremonial in the parish not only had obligations towards the care of the church. They also had responsibilities towards the care of the souls of the recently departed. The ceremonial required following a death needed to be spectacular and generous in many ways. It had to ensure a good turn-out of mourners and stay in their minds in order for them to offer continual prayers to speed the deceased's soul through Purgatory. Funerals and anniversaries could be some of the most spectacular one-off events of the year for many

parishioners but, for executors and churchwardens, organizational responsibilities would continue for long periods of time. The wishes for a funeral and subsequent remembrance could be documented in a will, but it was executors and churchwardens who had to ensure that the funeral was all it needed to be. If they did not fulfill their office to the very best of their ability, or if economic forces on earth were unsatisfactory, an immortal soul could be in peril of remaining in purgatory.

The economic forces of many rural Suffolk parishes and, therefore, people's livelihoods, was very dependent upon agriculture. Testators often left farm land or animals to the church in order that the churchwardens should receive a regular income to provide ongoing remembrance. Natural disasters, such as disease or famine, could render these donations useless, threatening the remembrance. Suffolk parishioners were keen to safeguard the health of the landscape and, therefore, their livelihoods both in life and death. For this reason, the landscape was imbued with ceremonial of its own. The next chapter will explore these ceremonies and the relationship between festive culture and the landscape.

Chapter 2: Festive Culture and the Landscape

The previous chapter demonstrated that the aspects of some religious ritual at times of festivity were dependent upon donations of agricultural land. Indeed, the vast majority of rural Suffolk parishioners were dependent upon the landscape for their livelihoods. Peter Warner has stated that society and landscape are inseparable; one cannot be interpreted without the other.[1] The need to protect the ongoing fertility of the landscape of rural parishes is an excellent way of understanding how embedded ritual was in parish life. Indeed, in rural parishes, ritual and the everyday interacted within the landscape. Rural parishioners needed to protect agricultural activities and, therefore, their livelihoods, and ritual associated with festivity was used to do this.

This chapter will discuss the ceremony and associated ritual that rural Suffolk parishioners performed within the landscape. It will start with a general account of the religious reverence of the landscape, going on to examine the feast of Rogationtide. This festival employed ritual to gain divine protection for the landscape, but was also of vital importance for economic and legal reasons, and for cementing communal identities. The chapter will then explore fertility festivals and processions, highlighting the benefit they were believed to bring to the landscape. It will also argue, however, that actions performed at these times could split communities, thus demonstrating the ambivalence of festivity itself.

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[1] Warner, *Bloody Marsh*, p.xii.

Reverence of the Landscape

Aspects of the landscape had a central place in the spiritual life of pre-Christian communities. Natural landscape features were regarded as the locations of divine power and ritual practices were often focused upon caves, woods and groves. Water was also believed to be a source of spiritual power, and bogs, lakes and estuaries were regarded as liminal spaces.[2] The landscape was also responsive to human activity, and it was important not to anger the deities who occupied the natural environment upon which people were so reliant. A sixth-century Archbishop, Martin of Braga, described with some concern how Saxon people invoked gods which inhabited rivers, forests and springs, and burned candles at crossroads.[3] The Bible, however, is full of iconographical motifs connected with natural landscape features, and was a source of evidence that these features were linked with spiritual experience. Trees, for example, represented the most important symbol of Christianity, that of Christ's ultimate sacrifice upon the cross. Equally, water is an especially powerful symbol in the Bible, often linked with spiritual regeneration and physical healing. Jesus sent a blind man to be cured at the pool of Siloam (John 9:1-12) and healed a lame man by the pool of Bethesda (John 5: 1-18). The River Jordan was the site of healing of Naaman by the prophet Elisha in the Old Testament (2 Kings 5: 14), and was also the site used by John the Baptist for his followers and Jesus (John 1: 28; Luke 3: 21-22).

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[2] Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland*, (Oxford: OUP, 2011), p.20.
[3] J.N. Hillgrath, *Christianity and Paganism, 350-750: the Conversion of Western Europe*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), p.62, in Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape*, p.24.

Natural landscape features, therefore, were an equally important part of Christian ritual. As the Middle Ages progressed, natural water features, particularly springs, became an important part of the hagiography of many saints. Miraculous springs appeared at sites where the decapitated heads of pious virgins such as St Winifred, St Juthwara and St Sidwell fell to the ground. These springs became wells as a source of holy water. The well at St Alban's was positioned at the site where the first British Christian martyr lost his head.[4] In Suffolk, a spring near the church of St Mary, Woolpit, was linked to a place of pilgrimage.[5] The image of the Holy Virgin in this church was often visited by those hoping for healing, and the nearby spring may also have had healing properties. Recent scientific tests have shown that the water has a high sulphate content which can be beneficial to eye complaints such as trachoma.[6] It is likely, therefore, that the relief or cure of infirmity brought about by the spring came to be linked with the church.

The legend of St Walstan of Bawburgh, a saint revered particularly in Norfolk and Suffolk, is another that features holy springs. Walstan was a king's son who may have been born in Blythburgh, Suffolk, which was then a royal vill. He was determined to renounce his kingdom and "follow Christ in wilfull povertie".[7] Walstan gave his clothes away to a poor man and went to Norfolk to become a reaper, working barefoot in the stubble. When he was forced to tread on thorns, his feet were preserved from harm. His work was blessed with miraculous fertility such as the seed in his sower's apron which was multiplied by an angel. Walstan's

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[4] Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape*, p.40.
[5] For more on this see Chapter 3: Pilgrimage.
[6] Clive Paine, 'The Chapel and Well of Our Lady', *PSIAH,* 28:1 (1993), p.11.
[7] M.R. James, 'Lives of St Walstan', *Norfolk Archaeology*, 19 (1917), p.241.

employers were so impressed that they offered to make him their heir, but he refused and, instead, asked for a pregnant cow. This proved to be equally fruitful, producing twin bullock calves. Some time later, Walstan was warned by an angel of his approaching death. His last request was that the bullocks should be harnessed to a cart and his body placed on it. As the bullocks pulled Walstan's corpse towards Bawburgh, they made a miraculous river crossing and, when stopping twice to relieve themselves, springs appeared in the ground. It was claimed that these springs "both to men and beast doth great remedie."[8]

Walstan's tomb became the focus of a cult popular with agricultural workers as benefitted his chosen lifestyle. These workers may have petitioned him in the hope of similar fertility miracles. Many of his miracles were for those of lower status. A harvester crushed under a cart of wheat was saved after offering St Walstan a prayer. His shrine was the focus of an annual pilgrimage on his feast day, 30th May, by "all mowers and sythe folowers sekynge hym ones in the yeare."[9] It is clear that members of agricultural-based communities were keen to invoke the help of saints to protect their own health. Many agricultural activities were dangerous; an accident which resulted in death or permanent injury would mean the loss of household income, perhaps for an entire family. It is also evident that agricultural workers wanted the saints to protect the landscape upon which they were so reliant. If the landscape failed, whole communities could become destitute. In this way, it appears that rural parishioners had many reasons for performing ritual within the

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[8] James, 'Lives of St Walstan', p.241.
[9] James, 'Lives of St Walstan', pp.252-3.

landscape: personal, communal and religious.[10] This ritual, and the times of festivity at which it was performed, particularly in rural Suffolk parishes, will now be discussed in detail.

Rogationtide

It was not only agricultural workers who called upon divine intervention to ensure the fertility of the landscape. Church authorities promoted rituals which were believed to have prophylactic properties. The feast of Rogationtide derived from pre-Christian ceremonies which were designed to combat war, illness, violent death and other non-agricultural terrors.[11] Before the end of the fourth century, the clergy of Vienne in Gaul began to tie their activities closer to the agricultural year by processing around the fields on the days before the Feast of the Ascension in order to bless the growing crops.[12] Ostensibly, this was a direct response to a period of earthquakes and crop failures.[13] In 747 this ritual was introduced into England, and the regulating canons gave the processions the name 'Rogations', from the Latin 'rogare' ('to ask'). They were fixed to the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday before Ascension day.

At about the same time, counties were divided into parishes, and the procession to bless the fields came to include the checking of boundaries.[14] An Anglo-Saxon

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[10] Many actions during festivity were carried out for a variety of reasons. This complexity is especially evident during times of pilgrimage, and carnivalesque festivities. See below, Chapter 3: Pilgrimage and Chapter 6: Carnival and the carnivalesque.

[11] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England*, (London: Penguin, 1971), p. 63.

[12] Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, p. 277.

[13] Roud, *The English Year*, p.176.

[14] Roud, *The English Year*, p. 176.

perambulation from 970, written in Old English, survives for the bounds of the parish of Stoke, now in Ipswich. This emphasizes the importance of natural landmarks for perambulations; the document references fords, rivers, a holy-spring, a marsh-mill, and the two earliest bridges recorded in Suffolk- Stoke Bridge and 'Hagenefordbrygce' (Handford Bridge).[15] Between 1200 and 1320, parish boundaries became fixed, and rogations became a communal perambulation. Roger Martyn, who, in the late-sixteenth century, recalled the pre-Reformation festivals and accompanying rituals in the rural Suffolk of his youth, described the Long Melford Rogation procession: "they went in procession…about the said green, with handbells ringing before them…about the bounds of the town, on the Munday, one way, on the Tuesday, another way, and on the Wednesday, another, praying for raine or fair weather as the time required."[16] In 1305, a list dictated by Archbishop Winchelsey added Rogation banners to the minimum furnishings of a church, and handbells were rung to discourage evil spirits from the land.[17] In the fifteenth century, Rogationtide was also known as Cross or Gang days, the former from the carrying of crosses and banners in procession, the latter signifying 'going'.[18] Between the mid-Suffolk villages of Combs and Badley, Rogation or 'gang flower' could be found in bloom. The flowers were given this name because of their use in the procession. John Gerarde's late sixteenth-century *Herball* states: "'Milkewoort' is called 'Ambarvalis flos'- so called because it doth specially flourish in the Crosse or Gang weeke or Rogation weeke; of which flowers the maidens, which use in the country to

[15] Norman Scarfe, *The Suffolk Landscape*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1972), pp. 128-129.
[16] Dymond and Paine eds., *The Spoil of Melford*, pp. 6-7.
[17] Frances and Joseph Gies, *Life in a Medieval Village*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1990), p. 163.
[18] Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun*, p. 278.

wake the processions, do make themselves garlands and nosgaies."[19] Here aspects of the landscape are brought into use within ceremonial upon and for the landscape.

Religious laws made these rituals compulsory; John Mirk claimed that to avoid going on processions was as bad a sin as to avoid going to church.[20] It was also ordered that people who processed should fast until noon and should not accompany the ceremony "with games, and horse races, and great banquets", but to walk "with fear and trembling, with the sign of Christ's passion and of our eternal redemption carried before them, together with the relics of saints."[21] A Lincolnshire preacher warned his Rogationtide congregation "not to come and go in procession talkin of nyse talys and japis by the wey, or by the feldes as ye walke…but ye scholde come mekely and lowly with good devocion and follo yowre crosse and yowre bells."[22] There is a tension here. As has already been demonstrated, actions performed at festivals were carried out for a variety of reasons. Some rural parishioners would have joined in Rogationtide ritual for social reasons, some for devotional reason, many for both. The Lincolnshire preacher, however, appears to have believed that the devotional and the social were not compatible. This tension, caused by opposing beliefs, could disrupt festivity.[23]

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[19] John Gerarde, *The Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes*, (London, 1597) in *East Anglian Notes and Queries*, NS Vol. 10 (1903-04), pp.143, 161.
[20] John Mirk, *Festial*, ed. Theodor Erbe, EETS, es 96 (1905).
[21] Henry Gee, ed., *Documents Illustrative of English Church History*, (London: Macmillan, 1896), in Hutton *The Stations of the Sun*, p. 277.
[22] Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 138.
[23] See also, Chapter 6: Carnival and the carnivalesque.

Rogationtide was also a traditional time for the settlement of parish disputes. One of its principal themes was the restoration of charity and harmony within the community.[24] Therefore, in the 1520s and 1530s the men of Chilton and the inhabitants of Clare in the south of Suffolk went in perambulation together each year to Chilton Street, "and there at a tree called Perryes Crosse at thende of the streete, the vicare redded a ghospell at the uttermost part of their bounds."[25] Preaching was also believed to offer protection to crops. A sixteenth-century commentator stated that gospels read in the open fields "by the virtue and operation of God's word, the power of the wicked spirits which keep in the air may be laid down, and the air made clean, to the intent the corn may be unharmed."[26] By performing part of Rogationtide rituals together, the parishioners of Clare and Chilton were demonstrating the power of this festival to offer social cohesion. Many parishes co-ordinated their festivities in order to meet at designated points within the landscape. The inhabitants of New and Old Buckenham, in Norfolk, for example, met in the castle gardens and walked a section of their bounds together.[27] However, this sense of community and identity that the processions fostered sometimes boiled over into stronger feelings. Even in the 1230s the bishop of Lincoln complained of the manner in which they had become so much an expression of parochial pride. As people marched behind their local church's cross and banners,

[24] Eamon Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Religion in an English Village*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 61.
[25] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 137.
[26] Richard Taverner, *Postils on the Epistles and Gospels*, ed. E. Carswell, (Oxford, 1841), p.280, in Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, p.279.
[27] NRO PD 254/171 in Nicola Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape: Place, Custom and Memory, 1500-1800*, (Oxford: Windgather Press, 2009), p.70.

they were attacked by members of rival communities.[28] If processions from neighbouring parishes happened to converge on a boundary, they would often come to blows, partly because they believed that the rival procession was driving its demons over the boundary into their parish.[29] Even in the seventeenth century, after the ceremonies had been reformed, a Dutch visitor noted that "if it happens that two such parties meet, a fight usually ensues."[30]

If Rogationtide rituals sometimes served to highlight the divisions between geographical communities, within the parish the "sideline" events following the perambulation ceremony could bring the community itself together. Communal eating and drinking were prominent activities, particularly in early sixteenth-century records, as Roger Martyn described in Long Melford: "having a drinking and a dinner there, upon Munday, being fasting day; and Tuesday, being a fish day, they had a breakfast with butter & cheese etc. at the Parsonage, & a drinking at Mr Clopton's by Kentwell, at his manor of Lutons…Upon Wednesday, being fasting day, they had a drinking at Melford Hall."[31] Alternatively, this largesse upon the part of 'village noteables' has been seen as a way of endorsing and underlining the realities of a community and its ordering, "throwing the mantle of holy peace and charity over the structures and pecking order of village life."[32]

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[28] F.M. Powicke and C.R. Cheyney, *Councils and Synods: AD 1205-1313*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press), p. 205 in Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun*, p. 278.
[29] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p.136.
[30] Roud, *The English Year*, p. 177.
[31] Dymond and Paine, *The Spoil of Melford*, p. 7.
[32] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 137.

The rituals themselves had another use, to confirm and continue mnemonic frameworks. They were instrumental in transmitting knowledge from the old to the young.[33] The serving of refreshments at certain points, such as those in the aforementioned manor houses of Long Melford, were essential in cementing these points in the minds of parishioners, and were particularly important at contentious boundaries. Rogationtide served to provide parishioners an opportunity to inspect and confirm ancient territorial limits and boundaries between villages.[34] This had precedence in the Bible through Old Testament references such as "Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance" and "Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's landmark" (Deuteronomy 19:14; Deuteronomy 27:17). When questioned in legal proceedings, Peter Underwood of New Buckenham, Norfolk, could not recall the exact course of the southern boundary of the parish, but he could remember the course of the perambulation across common land:

> by a Greene Way near Goldlockes Corner and Sheepmeare to a place called Hawghead and so fetched in Buckenham hawge… the drinkings in the pambulacon were made…upon the common there.[35]

It is likely that Underwood and other parishioners would have used the common as part of their everyday lives; it would have been a useful resource for them.[36] Here, the communal activity of drinking not only promoted neighbourliness, it also reinforced in people's memories the limit of the bounds of the common. Festivity

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[33] Nicola Whyte, 'Landscape, Memory and Custom: Parish identities, c.1550-1700', *Social History*, Vo. 32:2, 2007, pp. 5 & 8.
[34] Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape*, p.61.
[35] NA: PRO E133/8/1234 in Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape*, p.83.
[36] Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape*, p.83.

was, therefore, used to reinforce and stabilize important aspects of the economic landscape.

Other rituals included etching features into the landscape; trees were scored with hatchet marks. The seventeenth-century records of the Suffolk parish of Walberswick 'Beating the Bounds', the reformed version of Rogationtide, still exist. They are evidence of the enduring interaction between the parishioners and the landscape, and it is unlikely that actions carried out at certain points on the Walberswick boundary would have changed over time:

> we gooe over to deadmans Crosse & did lyke to ye Crosse where thear & boys
>
> threw stones there on ye great heape of stones hereby. And there then did
>
> we heare speaken of an Aysh tree yt had growen upon that meadowe at
>
> Deadmans Crosse. wereare [?once] made hyndreds of markes of old tyme by
>
> ye townsmen of Walberswicke when they went there boundes.[37]

One hundred years after the Reformation, the parishioners of Walberswick still remembered the action that took place during older Rogationtide ceremonies. Building piles of stones as the boys did in Walberswick was a popular mnemonic activity. At Burnham Thorpe in Norfolk, "at soche tyme as they go ther perambulacon alie a heape of stones at the upper ende of that waie by Holkhams bordere as a make to p[ar]te and devide the bounds of their towne from the bounds of Burnham Overy…and the inhabitants of Burnham Over lay also a heape of stones on the other side of that waie against the said heapes laid by Burnham Thorpe."[38] It

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[37] SRO(I), FC 185/E1/2.
[38] NA E134/37Eliz/East 17 in Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape*, p. 70.

is also known that in Southwold, Suffolk, boys were beaten or bumped on the head at points around the parish boundary.[39]

The reason that the Walberswick boundary perambulation was written down was a dispute with the lord of the manor Sir Robert Brooke: "…Paules ffen…thoughe Sir Robert have by violence all ye last yeare & styll have it from us…formerly Mr Thomas Neale ye Lords Bally would to prevent us having soo fare a boundes as deadmans crosse he dwelling in Biborowe…but when we last Recovered our Commons we prevented it, proved our Boundes very well, went as far as Deadmans cross."[40] In the seventeenth century, Sir Robert claimed that common land in Walberswick was, in fact, his property: "a marsh called Pauls Fenne…and a marsh called East Marsh."[41] According to the perambulation records, in Pauls Fen, Sir Robert, "yet have bestowte no cost there in, but leat it be spoyled for want of draynyngs, only some cost of raylinge at the heather end to keep out the [?right], as there by on his own ground, have set up a boarded house for his watchmene and greate dogs day & night to do the lyke."[42]

As this shows, authority of customary ceremonial and festive activities was particularly valuable in legal proceedings, especially those related to land disputes. The memories of elderly people were quoted in court cases again and again. The distant past was a powerful concept employed to justify or resist change to the way

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[39] M. Janet Becker, *The Story of Southwold*, (F. Jenkins, 1948).
[40] SRO(I), FC 185/E1/2.
[41] SRO(I) HA30: 50/22/3.1 [43]. See also, Warner, *Bloody Marsh*, p. 125.
[42] SRO(I), FC 185/E1/2.

of life, "for the past conferred an authority which the present could not."[43] The

underlying conviction here was that local customs existed time out of mind.

Therefore, in the court proceedings against Sir Robert Brooke, the Walberswick

parishioners claimed that he had prevented them from grazing their cattle on

common and heath land maintaining that "the tenants of the said manor inhabiting

the town of Walberswick have used to feed their great cattle of all sorts at times in

the yeare in a marsh called Pauls Fenne…and…East Marsh." This was witnessed by

eleven parishioners along with the time they had been grazing recorded next to their

names, for example, "Robert Harte…for 63 yeares; Robert Durrant…for 60 yeares."

Eight tenants also testified that Pauls Fenn lay in Walberswick and had "been taken

in by the inhabitants when they have gone their perambulacon."[44] Like the

parishioners of New Buckenham who were seeking to protect the economic assets of

their common land, this underlines the importance of Rogationtide ceremonial when

the parishioners of Walberswick needed to protect their everyday livelihoods. It was

a festival, and marked as such with actions that were distinct from usual, everyday

activities. However, it was also a festival which had serious, economic implications

that impacted heavily upon everyday livelihoods.

Other features of the landscape were also important in legal proceedings. Some

deponents would recount their personal biographies in relation to their experience

of the landscape. The perceived antiquity of landmark features was sometimes

deliberately fostered in order to boost claims of possession to rights to land.[45]

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[43] Whyte, 'Landscape, Memory and Custom', p. 7.
[44] SRO(I) HA30: 50/22/3.1 [43]. See also Warner, *Bloody Marsh*, p. 125.
[45] Whyte, 'Landscape, Memory and Custom', p. 6.

Therefore, it was important for younger generations to learn the landmarks, and more elderly members of a community had a responsibility to pass on their knowledge to the young. In the late sixteenth century, Robert Rydde of South Wootton, Norfolk, could remember the bounds of the parish "by reason that he hath gone the pambulacon of the town" and was "towld the same by his father and other ancient men of the towne."[46] It was also important that the knowledge of boundaries was maintained outside the time of Rogation rituals. Organized processions helped to reinforce collective knowledge but the "correct and ancient bounds" needed to be recognized in the context of everyday life. Roger Hudson of Amble, Northumberland, for example, knew the boundstone between Amble and Billing as his father made him take notice of it by striking the stone with his staff as he walked past.[47] Here, the formal festival of Rogationtide is echoed and recalled in everyday activities.

Rogationtide was, thus, a festival which provided a "ritualization of space and consecration of property."[48] Other festivals, such as May Day and Midsummer Day, allowed people to commit "crimes against the vert" by stealing flowers, timbers and trees from forests and adjacent parks.[49] These actions, and their undertones of pagan behaviour, would later enrage puritans such as Philip Stubbes who described:

> The manner of May games in England… every parish, town and village… go
> into the woods and groves… where they spend all night in pleasant pastimes,
> and in the morning they return bringing with them birch boughs, and

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[46] NA PRO E134/34&35Eliz/Mich7 in Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape*, p.67.
[47] NA, E134/13JasI/Mich 4 in Whyte. 'Landscape, Memory and Custom', p. 9.
[48] Laroque, *Shakespeare's Festive World*, p.13.
[49] Laroque, *Shakespeare's Festive World*, p.13.

branches of trees, to deck their assemblies withal. And no marvel, for there is

a great Lord present among them, as superintendent and lord over their

pastimes and sports: namely Satan, Prince of Hell: But their chiefest jewel

they bring from thence is the may-pole, which they bring home with great

veneration… they draw home this May-pole (this stinking idol rather) which is

covered all over with flowers and herbs… And thus being reared up, with

handkerchiefs and flags streaming on the top, they strew the ground round

about, bind green boughs about it, set up summer halls, bowers and arbours

hard by it. And then fall they to banquet and feast, to leap and dance about

it, as the heathen people did at the dedication of their idols…[50]

This description is evidence of how important natural aspects of the landscape were

to festive entertainments. The fact that festival, in the guise of Rogationtide, could

serve as a solemn ratification of boundaries, but at other times gave communities

licence to transgress those same boundaries has, rightly, been seen as a striking

illustration of its ambivalence.[51] This ambivalence would also allow festivals to

develop into times such as carnival, when opposite beliefs would clash.[52]

Fertility Festivals

Stubbes' vociferous diatribe against May activities also highlights the fact that many

festivals connected with the natural environment seem to have had pre-Christian

roots. The feast of Midsummer was incorporated into the Christian calendar and

renamed as the Feast of John the Baptist. Elements of the original festival as the

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[50] Phillip Stubbes, *Anatomie of Abuses*, (1583) ed. Frederick J. Furnivall, (London: New Shakespeare Society, 1879).
[51] Laroque, *Shakespeare's Festive World*, p.13.
[52] For more on this see Chapter 6: Carnival and the Carnivalesque.

climax of fire and fertility rites, however, were retained by the ritual lighting of bonfires.[53] The celebrations surrounding bonfires lit during the early sixteenth century in Long Melford were described by Roger Martyn:

> on Midsummer even…if it fell not on the fish day, they had some long pyes of mutton, & peascods, set out upon boards, with the aforesaid quantity of bread, and ale; and in all these bonefires, some of the honest and more civil poor neighbours were called in, & sat at the board with my grandfather, who had, at the lighting of the bonefires, wax tapers, with bowles of wax, yellow and green, sett up, all the breadth of the hall, lighted then, & burning there, before the image of St John the Baptist, & after they were put out, a watch-candle was lighted, & set in the midst of the said hall, upon the pavement, burning all night.[54]

Three types of bonfire were lit on the Feast of St John the Baptist and these were described in the fourteenth century by a Shropshire monk. The 'bonfire' was made of bones and intended to drive away evil with its stench; 'wakefires' were of wood and were the focal point of merrymaking; and 'St John's fires' were built of wood and bones, and fulfilled both functions. It was believed these bonfires directly aided the agricultural landscape as they gave protection against threat from wet weather and blight that was such a risk in early summer.[55]

Another festival encouraged the fertility and welfare of crops at the beginning of the agricultural year. In East Anglia, emphasis was placed on ritual at the opening of the

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[53] Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, p. 3.
[54] Dymond and Paine eds., *The Spoil of Melford*, pp. 8-9.
[55] Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry* England, p. 38.

ploughing season which began immediately after the end of the Christmas holiday. Many parishes would drag the plough around the village, and the author of *Dives and Pauper*, writing in the early fifteenth century, described "leading the plough abouten the fire as for good beginning of the year" in order to condemn it as a superstition.[56] By the mid fifteenth century, these rituals were concentrated on the first Monday after Twelfth Night, which became known as "Plough Monday". Although records from Suffolk parishes do not state whether ploughs were actually pulled around the villages, Plough Monday was a popular time for collections of money for the parish, and for social gatherings. The parishioners of Huntingfield had four financial gatherings on Plough Monday in the early sixteenth century, and organized two church ales. The Huntingfield churchwardens also referenced Plough Tuesday, the following day, as a day on which the church received income.[57] The parishioners of Cratfield recorded gatherings six times on Plough Monday and, one year, held an ale. It was also an important festival for legal and financial reasons in Cratfield, as it marked the beginning of the accounting year.[58] The parish of Denington was another which ran its accounting year from Plough Monday unto Plough Monday.[59] The parish of Metfield had two 'plowrevys' who worked under the churchwardens. In 1511-12, these were John Grene and John Corby and they were responsible for the Plough gathering which was paid to the churchwardens on Plough Monday.[60]

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[56] P.H. Barnum, ed. *Dives and Pauper*, (EETS, 1976), p. 157.
[57] SRO(I) FC 57/E1/1. For more on ales as important times of parish fundraising see Chapter 1: The organization of festive culture in the parish and Chapter 5: Festive Culture as Entertainment.
[58] Holland ed., *Cratfield Parish Papers*, pp. 22, 25, 28, 32, 54 and 29.
[59] SRO(I) FC 112/E1/1, pp.2, 6, 8.
[60] SRO(I) FC 91/E5/7, p.2.

The income from Plough Monday events did not necessarily go directly to parish funds. Many East Anglian churches had 'plough lights' burning before altars, which suggests parishioners offered ongoing prayer for the success of their agricultural activities. In the church of St Agnes, Cawston (Norfolk) a gallery, commonly known as a 'Plough gallery', still exists. The gallery is inscribed with a fertility prayer, part of which reads:

> God spede the plow
>
> And send us ale corne enow
>
> our purpose for to mak
>
> at crow of cok of ye plowlete of Sygate[61]

'Sygate' was a road in the parish and its reference in the prayer suggests that a light was kept burning there throughout the ploughing season.[62] Sygate may have been the most direct route to the outlying fields, and a shrine and light placed there was a convenient point for agricultural workers to stop and offer prayers for ongoing fertility of the land. In the Suffolk parish of Brundish, it was the young people of the village who made the Plough Monday gathering.[63] This may mean that they were also responsible for the upkeep of any related light.

Palm Sunday was a further festival which involved lay ceremonial in order to protect the crops. Having received the Sacrament on Palm Sunday, young people would often go out into the fields and bless the crops. This was not the only ceremonial which included the direct involvement of lay people on Palm Sunday. In a similar

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[61] Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape*, p.39.
[62] Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape*, p.40.
[63] SRO(I) FC 89/A2/1, p. 3.

manner to Rogationtide, Palm Sunday was a time of procession. Roger Martyn also wrote a detailed description of a Palm Sunday procession in Long Melford. He described the Host "…carried in procession about the churchyard, under a fair canopy born by four yeomen."[64] To be chosen to bear the canopy over the Sacrament in procession would have been a matter of great honour for lay people as they were brought into such close proximity to the Host.[65] At the church gate, Martyn described the procession of parishioners going west around the church, whilst the Host was processed east. As the two processions approached each other, a "boy, with a thing in his hand, pointed to it, signifying a prophet, as I think, sang, standing upon the turret."[66] The 'thing' was probably a staff or perhaps a scroll.[67] At this point, "all did kneel down, and then, rising up, went and met the Sacrament, and so went singing together, into the church." As the choir boys reached the porch, one of the clerks "did cast over among the boys flowers, and singing cakes."[68] The elaborate ceremony continued inside the church. This ritual may appear to have been elaborately choreographed, but parishioners would have been very familiar with it. Following this, as we have already seen, having processed and received the Sacrament, young people would return to the landscape to bless the corn, in a less formal way. Just as the laity of a rural parish processed through the landscape at Rogationtide to ask for protection for their crops and, therefore, their livelihoods, at

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[64] Dymond and Paine eds., *The Spoil of Melford*, p. 5.

[65] For more on the need to be in close proximity to the Host see below, Chapter 4: The use of Objects in Festive Culture.

[66] Dymond and Paine eds., *The Spoil of Melford*, pp. 5-6.

[67] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 24.

[68] Dymond and Paine eds., *The Spoil of Melford*, p. 6. These were probably a reward for singing, and unlikely to be cakes in the conventional sense. The term was often applied to Holy Bread which was normally blessed, not consecrated, by the priest after Mass. It would be cut up and given to the parishioners as a symbol of their common faith (Dymond and Paine eds., *The Spoil of Melford*, p.6, n.27).

Palm Sunday they processed around the religious landscape of their church to ask for protection for their eternal souls.

Processions

Processions were clearly important aspects of life within a rural parish for the protection of the landscape and hence of parishioners' livelihoods. Those which involved many members of the parish were very common throughout Suffolk. The Guild of Jesus in the parish of Creeting St Mary held a yearly procession. From at least 1497 until 1538, the year the guild was dissolved, a "baner Berer" was employed to carry the guild's banners in the procession which was accompanied by music.[69] In 1501, the guild records state that: "the bredryn are a greable that ye Minstrall xall haue ou[ghte] of the stok yerly xijd helping the holder", and, in 1497, they also paid for a tabourer.[70] Metfield parishioners shared a procession with neighbouring Mendham, contributing towards expenses and food.[71] The importance of processions is evident in the names given to certain features of the landscape. In a 1577 survey, for example, a lane known as 'Procession Way' divided the parishes of Halesworth and Spexhall.[72]

The landscape also provides reminders of solemn processions. The body of a person who died in a hamlet or parish which was served by a 'mother church' located elsewhere, would need to be taken in procession to its burial in the distant

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[69] John Wasson, ed. *Records of Plays and Players in Norfolk and Suffolk, 1330-1642,* Malone Society Collections 11 (1980/81), pp. 151-154.
[70] Wasson, *Records of Plays and Players*, p.151.
[71] SRO(I) FC 91/E5/7, pp. 1 & 2.
[72] *Halesworth: Towards a Local History*, (Halesworth WEA, 1979), p. 51.

churchyard. These processions went along lanes known by names such as 'Beerway' which was used to carry coffins two miles from Hinton to Holy Trinity, Blythburgh.[73] In Wenhaston, 'the way leading by Beerhedge towards the church of Wenhaston' connected the parish church with a chapel in the hamlet of Mells.[74] Church records from other Suffolk parishes show that they were, usually, well-equipped for processions. Bequests of banners of the Holy Trinity (the church's dedication) and Our Lady of Pity were made to Blythburgh.[75] Thirty years later banners depicting both the Holy Trinity and Our Lady are listed in a 1547 inventory along with one of St Nicholas "for every day".[76] Bequests were also made for a banner of St Margaret to Reydon; Our Lady, St Anne and the Trinity at Southwold; and St Peter and the Assumption of Our Lady at Wangford.[77] The inventories of Cratfield, Huntingfield, Blythburgh and Rumburgh Priory list banners made of silk, whilst Cratfield also owned a banner "of the marterdom of Sent Styven".[78] St Mary's Church, Bungay, owned a banner of St Thomas Beckett, whilst Mildenhall church listed cloths of the resurrection and the Trinity in its 1547 inventory.[79] Banners were often hung upon portable crosses which were carried in procession. For this reason, banners were sometimes described as 'cross cloths', such as the two silk and one linen painted

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[73] SRO(I) HA30: 50/22/10.9(6). See also Warner, *Blything Hundred*, p. 120.
[74] Revd W. R. Growers, 'Chapel of St Margaret's, Mells' *Proceedings of Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History*, 8:3, (1894), pp. 334-379 in Warner, *Blything Hundred*, p. 121.
[75] Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour,* p. 207.
[76] Revd. A. Suckling, *The History and Antiquities of the County Suffolk*, (London: John Weale, 1846), Vol. II, p.156.
[77] Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour*, p. 207.
[78] Holland, *Cratfield Parish Papers*, p. 43; SRO(I) FC 57/E1/1; Suckling, *History and Antiquities*, p. 156; Pam Walker, 'A Rumburgh Priory Inventory from the Fifteenth Century', *Suffolk Review*, NS 53, Autumn 2009, pp. 42; Holland, *Cratfield Parish Papers*, p. 43.
[79] SRO(L) 116/E1/1, p.36; Middleton-Stewart, ed. *Records of the Churchwardens of Mildenhall*, pp. 111, 127.

cloths at Cratfield.[80] These banners may also have been displayed in some relation to three-dimensional images as the "ij steyned clothyes ffor sseynd Andrew" at Huntingfield.[81]

The carrying of crosses in procession was a liturgical requirement, and it was believed that the conveyance of crosses through the fields would ward the devil away from the crops.[82] A sixteenth-century bishop of Lincoln declared: "wher soo ever the devyll…do see the syne of this crosse, he flees, he byddes not, he strykes not, he cannot hurte".[83] Rumburgh Priory church owned two portable crosses, one silver and one gilt. The 1482 inventory notes them particularly as belonging to the parish, so they may well have been used in parish processions.[84] Some crosses were placed upon staves in order to make them more visible in processions. Cratfield owned 'a cross staff of copyr and gylte with iij clothes to [put] upon the cros stavys'.[85] As these inventories show, both crosses and staves must have been quite valuable; in 1885 the parish of Henstead was recorded as still owning a locker for the Processional Cross.[86] Bells were also deemed a necessity for processions as, like the crosses, it was believed that the noise would drive away evil spirits. The parishioners of St Mary, Bungay, ensured that the clamour was as effective as it could be by

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[80] Holland, *Cratfield Parish Papers*, p. 43.
[81] SRO(I) FC 57/E1/1.
[82] Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape*, p.35.
[83] John Longlond, *A Sermon made before the kynge his hyghenes at Rychemunte, upon good fryday, the yere of oure Lorde MCCCCCXXVI by Johan Longlond bishop of Lincoln*, A Short-Title Catalogue of Books printed in England, Scotland and Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad 1475-1640, 16795.5, in Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p.280.
[84] Walker, *A Rumburgh Priory Inventory*, p. 42.
[85] Holland, *Cratfield Parish Papers*, p. 43.
[86] *East Anglian, or Notes and Queries*, NS Vol. I (1885-86), p. 244.

paying the sexton to ring the loud church bells during their processions.[87] Fragments of an inventory from Mildenhall record portable bells "of laton" (a kind of brass alloy) which would have been carried alongside the banners during festivals such as Rogationtide, and used as part of ritual to bless and protect the landscape.[88]

With richly decorated banners, gold and silver crosses, clanging bells, and singing on the part of participants, parish processions were probably quite rowdy affairs, something that has already been shown through the confrontations of neighbouring parish processions at Rogationtide. Beyond parish-wide affairs, processions by churchwardens, accompanied by their parish's banners, to bishop's visitations gave the wardens a chance to meet their counterparts and draw comparisons. This, of course, led to competition for position and visibility. In the thirteenth century, Robert Grossteste, bishop of Lincoln, wrote in a diocesan statute:

> rectors of churches and priests should not permit their parishioners to compete with each other over whose banners should go first in the annual visitation of the mother church, because brawls or even deaths result from this.[89]

Although this may sound violent, it does show the importance of parish pride within the wider community. At the Reformation, the original reason given for a 1547 injunction which put a stop to processions was this strife for precedence and the general disorder which marked these occasions.[90] Although, ultimately, it was

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[87] SRO(L) 116/E1/1, p.36.
[88] Middleton-Stewart, ed. *Records of the Churchwardens of Mildenhall* pp. 124, 127.
[89] *Episcopal Statutes of Robert Grossteste for the Diocese of Lincoln, c.1239*, trans. John Shinners, in French, *People of the Parish*, p.33.
[90] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p.62.

admitted that processions were superfluous, it does show that general behaviour had not changed in 300 years. This is also another example of the ambivalence of festival. Processions were intended to unify a single community or bring together rival communities peacably but, often, they would turn into times of confrontation and violence.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the relationship between festive culture and the landscape. For the rural communities of Suffolk, the agricultural landscape was of vital importance to their everyday livelihoods. For this reason, the landscape was imbued with ceremonial and ritual of its own. In pre-Christian times it was believed that deities shared the natural environment which people were dependent upon, and it was important not to anger them. Christian ritual was built upon environmental motifs in the Bible which showed that natural landscape features were linked with spiritual experiences. Miraculous springs, especially, became an important aspect of Christianity. They were often believed to have healing powers and, as such, became sites of pilgrimage. Many Christian festivals included ritual which was intended to protect the agricultural landscape and ensure ongoing fertility. Some festivals such as Midsummer, or the Feast of St John the Baptist, still contained pre-Christian elements. Clearly, the most effective methods for protecting the landscape were the oldest, the most 'tried and tested'.

Other prophylactic rituals were found in festivals such as Rogationtide which used processions to bless the crops and drive demons from the landscape. The economic

landscape, therefore, was protected through religious actions. The rituals of this festival were also called upon for legal and financial reasons; Rogationtide confirmed the ownership of a landscape. For agricultural communities, grazing and common rights were essential for everyday livelihoods, and Rogationtide perambulations were often used as evidence in legal disputes. Rogationtide, however, was also a time which could show the ambivalence of festival. It was intended to unite a community and ensure the ongoing health of the agricultural landscape but, often, it would turn into a time of confrontation, especially when rival parishes met on disputed boundaries. The same was true for different times of festivity. Rogationtide ratified boundaries and confirmed the importance of the natural landscape for people's everyday lives. Other festivals, however, would allow people to cross the same boundaries and remove aspects of the same natural landscape.

This chapter has discussed rural Suffolk parishioners moving through the landscape using ritual in order to protect their own everyday way of life. However, other people also moved through the Suffolk landscape in order to take part in another aspect of festive culture: pilgrimage. The next chapter will explore the impact pilgrimage had on the rural parishes of Suffolk, and how the parishioners exploited visiting pilgrims for profitable reasons both religious and financial.

Chapter 3: Pilgrimage

The previous chapter demonstrated that the landscape was of such vital importance to rural Suffolk parishioners that they used a variety of rituals to protect it. Some of these rituals involved parishioners moving through the landscape itself. They were not the only ones to do so, however. Others regularly moved through the landscape of Suffolk as part of another aspect of festive culture- pilgrimage. Just as the use of ritual upon the landscape demonstrates how embedded it was in parish life, so an exploration of the relationship between pilgrimage and rural parishioners can highlight the economic and financial side of festive culture. This chapter will argue that whilst pilgrimage can appear to have been a complete break from the quotidian for some, for many it provided opportunities to sustain their everyday lives.

The chapter will start by exploring the broader motivations of those who went on pilgrimage, before discussing both the major and more local centres of pilgrimage within Suffolk. The chapter will show that these centres were presented as something exceptional to the everyday in order to attract more visitors. However, the chapter will then go on to analyze pilgrimage from a new perspective, that of pilgrimage as a business and considering the pilgrim as a commodity; it will be argued that pilgrims could be exploited financially by both religious institutions and the laity of rural Suffolk. This chapter will demonstrate the ways in which money was made from local, national and international pilgrims moving through Suffolk, thus evincing the material underpinnings of festive culture. By considering pilgrimage in this way,

it is possible to conclude that the festive was not distinct from the quotidian; there was a necessary overlap between the two.

Motivation

Like many other aspects of festive culture, pilgrimage was often seen as a time of release. In *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, Victor and Edith Turner identified similarities between pilgrimage and rites of passage. Like some other rites of passage, pilgrimage encouraged people to move away from their normal, everyday lives, and enter different social and spiritual worlds. They described the experience of 'losing' one's old identity and encountering others on pilgrimage as *communitas* stating that "it has something magical about it. Those who experience *communitas*, have a feeling of endless power."[1] It may have been this feeling which caused one of Chaucer's Canterbury pilgrims, the Wife of Bath, to include pilgrimage amongst other pleasurable pastimes as she reminisced about a time apart from her fifth husband:

> I hadde the better leyser for to pleye,
>
> And for to se, and eek for to be seye [also, seen]
>
> Of lusty folk…
>
> Therefore I made my visitaciouns
>
> To vigils and to processiouns.
>
> To prechyng eek, and these pilgrimages,
>
> To pleyes of myracles, and to mariages,

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[1] Victor and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), in 'Pilgrimage and Social Anthropology' in *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage: Journey, Spirituality and Daily Life through the Centuries*, (Universities of York and St John's Nottingham, 2007), on CD-ROM. Although the Turners' theory has been influential, critics have highlighted the fact it emphasises the idea of pilgrimage as a one-off event, involving travelling great distances. This is less easy to sustain in contexts where pilgrimage involves local travel perhaps year after year.

> And wered upon my gaye scarlet gytes.   [robes][2]

Benson has observed that most of the Canterbury pilgrims seem "pure holiday merrymakers" taking no interest in the devout aspect of their journey.[3] As presented by the Wife of Bath, pilgrimage was a "temporary release from the constrictions and norms of ordinary living" and it was important for participants that it was an occasion in their lives.[4] Many wanted to get away from their villages and daily routines, and travel. Journeys to shrines were excellent excuses to see new places and people and be entertained.[5] Like Chaucer's Canterbury pilgrims, parties of friends and neighbours would often band together to visit a shrine, fostering a feeling of fellowship and festivity. For example, when an agent was ordered to call upon some tenants in the village of Snailwell in Cambridgeshire to collect rents, he found most people conveniently away at Canterbury and elsewhere. He was forced to return home empty handed.[6] The journeys would mostly be undertaken, like that of Chaucer's pilgrims, in spring and summer when travel was easier. They would often coincide with feast days when shrines were offering indulgences. Major feasts were accompanied, frequently, by fairs and markets, which were an additional attraction. Pilgrims may also gave been diverted by musicians and entertainers as they were visiting the shrine itself. In the twelfth century, the entertainment around one shrine was described as being "inappropriately jocund", and a man was struck mad after staging "a somewhat ribald interlude".[7]

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[2] Larry D. Benson, gen. ed. *The Riverside Chaucer*, (Oxford: OUP, 1988), III, ll.551-559.

[3] Benson, *The Riverside Chaucer*, p.4.

[4] Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p.171.

[5] Ronald C. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England*, (London: Dent, 1977), p.40.

[6] Bennett, *The Pastons and their England*, p.210.

[7] Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*, p.40.

Pilgrimage, however, was multi-faceted. For some, it was a solemn expression of faith, however, "a journey made…as an act of religious devotion."[8] Chaucer's Parson reminds his fellow travellers of the reality of many pilgrimages: "Commone penaunce is that preestes enjoyen men communly in certeyn caas, as for to goon preaventure naked in pilgrimages, or bare foot."[9] Pilgrimage was, essentially, a pious practice, and its primary purpose had always been "to see the holy, concretely embodied in a sacred place, a relic, or a specially privileged image."[10] Most pilgrims believed, fervently, in the potency of the relics of saints.[11] Amongst other attributes, relics were perceived as having the ability to bring success in war and to confer protection in times of adversity. A saint's reliquary or shrine contained not just their bones, but their very person.[12] Corpses were the 'security deposits' left by saints upon their deaths, and were a guarantee of their continuing interest in those still on earth. Therefore, they were immediate sources of supernatural power, and close contact with them was a means of participating in that power.[13] The living presence of the saint also protected the church which housed their tomb and many pilgrims would visit the tomb to make offerings to the saint.

Pilgrimages of devotion to a saint were undertaken to benefit a person's immortal soul, particularly by gaining indulgences offered by many shrines. Just as the parish

[8] *OED*, s.v. 'pilgrimage'.
[9] Benson, *The Riverside Chaucer*, X, l.104.
[10] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p.191.
[11] Nigel Saul, *A Companion to Medieval England: 1066-1485*, (Stroud: Tempus, 2000), p.167.
[12] Saul, *A Companion to Medieval England*, p.167.
[13] Patrick Geary, 'Sacred commodities: the circulation of medieval relics' in Arjun Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in cultural perspective*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1986), p.176.

church in Mildenhall offered indulgences on the feasts of Saints Philip and James, Corpus Christi, the dedication day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Candlemas, other shrines would offer indulgences on certain feast days.[14] Margery Kempe visited Assisi on 1st August 1414 to receive "gret pardon of plenyr remyssyon, for to purchasyn grace, mercy & forgevyenes for hiir selfe, for alle hir frendys, for alle hir enemys, & for all the sowlys in Purgatory."[15] In a sense, indulgences formalized and even quantified the belief that pilgrimage brought relief from sin.

One of the ways in which the saints could demonstrate their power was through miracles carried out by contact with, or proximity to, their relics. Throughout the history of Christianity people had demanded miraculous demonstrations of the faith, and some of the most common and powerful were those of healing.[16]   A common belief in the Middle Ages was that sickness and injury were often a result of sin and, on many occasions, saints were described as *medici* who shared Christ's gift of healing. For example, a twelfth-century pilgrim from Middleton in Suffolk who was visiting the shrine of Thomas Becket in Canterbury, experienced a vision in which St Edmund and St Thomas warned him of the dangers of man-made potions and mendicaments.[17] Many people travelled, therefore, long distances to seek a cure for illness or other infirmity at a shrine.[18] Sometimes pilgrims would switch allegiance from one to saint to another if petitions had been unsuccessful. According to the life

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[14] See above, Chapter 1: The organization of festive culture.

[15] Barry Windeatt ed., *The Book of Margery Kempe*, (Harlow: Longman, 2000), p.181.

[16] Saul, *A Companion to Medieval England*, p.167.

[17] Carol Rawcliffe, 'Curing bodies and healing souls: pilgrimage and the sick in medieval East Anglia', in Colin Morris and Peter Robbits ed. *Pilgrimage: The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), p.112.

[18] See Rawcliffe, 'Curing bodies and healing souls'.

of St Walstan, a Canterbury weaver crippled with 'bone ache' petitioned St Thomas a Becket at his shrine. He received no relief from his ailment until a Norfolk pilgrim to Canterbury suggested he try St Walstan. The weaver vowed a pilgrimage to Bawburgh and was instantly healed. He then walked to Norfolk in order to give thanks at St Walstan's tomb.[19]

Other pilgrimages were undertaken as penance, and the element of hardship of these journeys was of the essence.[20] In this way, pilgrimage resembled exile, detaching individuals from their familiar surroundings.[21] Erik Spindler has studied penitential pilgrimages ordered by the authorities of the Low Countries. His work shows that penal pilgrimage was imposed by all types of jurisdiction: urban, seigneurial and ecclesiastical. This form of pilgrimage was often made to one or more named shrines which were local or far away depending on the severity of the crime. Sometimes particular places were linked with certain crimes. A murderer from Flanders, for example, was ordered to make a pilgrimage to Canterbury.[22] As a civil, rather than ecclesiastical sanction, penitential pilgrimage was part of the legal system in the Low Countries. It does not appear to have been much used by the civil authorities in England, but was often sanctioned by the ecclesiastical courts. In 1326, Mabel de Boclonde was convicted of adultery and sentenced to be beaten with rods six times

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[19] James, 'Lives of St Walstan', pp.262-3. For more on St Walstan see above, Chapter 2: Festive Culture and the Landscape.
[20] Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p.196.
[21] Diana Webb, 'Patterns of Pilgrimage in England c.1100 – c.1500: Penance and Punishment' in *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage*.
[21] Cubitt, 'Saints' Cults and Pilgrimage in England'.
[22] Erik Spindler, 'Migration to East Anglia in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: Why did they come?', *East Anglia and the North Sea World* Conference, Centre for East Anglian Studies, University of East Anglia, 14th April 2010.

around various churches. As an alternative to this punishment, Mabel was ordered to make a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela.[23]

English bishops often sentenced penitential pilgrimage over short distances and a good example of this comes from Suffolk. In 1499, a group of parishioners from the village of Great Ashfield were found guilty of magical practices. Marion Clerk, daughter of John and Agnes Clerk had allegedly received a gift from 'lez Gracyous Fayry', and was able to heal, prophesy bad events in the future, and expose concealed treasure. Her mother also, when a child, "went round so much with 'les Elvys' that her head and neck were twisted backwards for a time."[24] She and John, naturally, had tried to exploit their daughter's gift for financial reasons. As punishment, the Clerk family were required to perform public penance in their parish church, as well as at the shrines of Norwich and Bury St Edmunds, and at Woolpit in Suffolk during the procession of Our Lady. In this case, the shrine was seen as a suitable and conspicuous forum for the "exemplary punishment of religious deviants"[25], and instead of being exploited to increase a person's income, pilgrimage was used to punish those trying to improve their livelihoods through means unacceptable to the church.

As well as the penitent, intercessory and festive characteristics of pilgrimage, late medieval men and women were well aware of its symbolic value. Many saw it is a

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[23] C. Johnson ed. *Registrum Hamonis Hethe 1319-1352*, Canterbury and York Society, Vol. 48 (Oxford: 1942), I, p.202 in C.M. Storrs, *Jacobean Pilgrims from England to St James of Compostela from the early twelfth to the late fifteenth century*, (London: Confraternity of St James, 1998), p.58.
[24] Peter Northeast, 'Superstition and Belief: A Suffolk case of the Fifteenth Century', *Suffolk Review*, n.s. 20 (1993), pp.45.
[25] Northeast, 'Superstition and Belief', p.44.

ritual reenactment of their whole lives, and they interpreted it as a journey towards the sacred.[26] The sermons of St Bernard described how best men and women could negotiate their way through life:

> Blessed are those who can live as pilgrims in this wicked world, and remained untainted by it… For the pilgrim travels the king's highway neither to the right nor the left. If he should come upon a place where there is fighting and quarreling, he would not become involved. And if he should come to a place where there is dancing or leaping, or where there is celebration…these will not entice him, for he knows that he is a stranger, and as such has not interest in such things.[27]

Some people took this literally and became 'professional' pilgrims, continuing to make lengthy pilgrimages for most of their lives. They carried out a style of living in which pilgrimage, or the appearance of it, was the basis.[28] For them, pilgrimage and the everyday literally became one. The image of the wanderer on the pathway of life, besieged on every side by temptation and evil, soon became commonplace. To choose the path of voluntary poverty was to follow Christ in the strictest sense, and was urged in the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven" (Luke 6: 20). It is clear, therefore, that the motivation behind pilgrimage was multi-faceted, and that many people took part in the ritual. This chapter will now discuss pilgrimage in Suffolk, the locations to which pilgrims travelled both from inside and outside the county, and the ways in which those resident in the county could exploit pilgrims financially.

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[26] Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p.192.
[27] Laurinda Dixon, *Bosch*, (London: Phaidon, 2003), p.103.
[28] Diana Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England*, (London: Hambledon, 2000), p.xvi.

Bury St Edmunds

Pilgrimage in Suffolk was dominated by the shrine of St Edmund, king and martyr, at the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds. In 1095, Edmund's body was translated to the abbey and entombed alongside the relics of two other Suffolk saints, St Botolph and St Jurmin, son of another East Anglian king, Anna. These three saints provided the focus for an East Anglian royal cult; in the Anglo-Saxon period alone the shrine and the abbey were honoured by King Cnut and Edward the Confessor.[29] Henry II also patronized the shrine and cult, naming his second son Edmund, whilst Henry III gave the shrine a gold crown.[30] Henry VI was a guest of the abbey for some months in 1433-34, which was a sign of the king's favour. At the end of the visit, Henry and some of his courtiers were made lay-brothers of the abbey, and Abbot Curteys commissioned a verse account of the life and miracles of St Edmund by the Bury monk John Lydgate, which was lavishly illuminated and presented to the king.[31] The abbots of Bury St Edmunds were keenly aware of the importance of this shrine and its status within Europe, and were keen to promote it and encourage pilgrims.

The layout of the grid-pattern of Bury's streets may have been deliberately planned to frame the approach to the abbey. One street, now known as Churchgate Street, was built to run due west from the presbytery and nave of the abbey church, taking

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[29] Jocelin of Brakelond, *Chronicle of the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds*, eds. and trans. Diana Greenway and Jane Syers, (Oxford: OUP, 1989), p.xii.
[30] Diana Webb, 'Patterns of Pilgrimage in England, c.1100-c.1500: Some destinations in England' in *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage*; Sarah Blick, 'Patterns of Pilgrimage in England, c.1100-c.1500: Pilgrimage Art and Architecture- Bury St Edmunds' in *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage*.
[31] See John Lydgate, *The Life of St Edmunds, King and Martyr*, ed. A.S.G. Edwards, (London: British Library, 2004).

in the enormous gate-tower which was also used as the bell-tower of the church of St James the Greater. Scarfe believes that this was originally planned to recall the shrine of Santiago de Compostela which was Bury St Edmunds' main European competitor as a popular pilgrim attraction.[32] The shrine of St Edmund was also suitably magnificent. Illustrations from Lydgate's *Life of St Edmund* shows that the shrine base had rounded niches for prayers which were topped by gables. In between the gables were relief sculptures of the life of St Edmund. In each corner was a large candle, raised on pinnacles sprinkled with crockets. Resting on the marble base was an elaborate house-shaped feretory which was covered in gold and gems, and featured relief images of saints with sumptuous crosses at each corner.[33]

All this careful planning and display was deliberately chosen to be something spectacular and far-removed from most people's everyday experiences. It helped ensure a steady flow of pilgrims to the shrine, many of which also came as Edmund had a reputation as a healer. He was considered so powerful that it was said that one pilgrim regained his eyesight when his party merely came within sight of the abbey's bell-tower.[34] St Edmund was also invoked for help in conception and childbirth and, by the fifteenth century at least, the monks had formalized his assistance into a ritual which has been described as "monastic theatre".[35] Each year, a white bull garlanded with ribbons and flowers was led from the abbey meadow at Haberdon through the town streets. Women who desired children would walk alongside the bull, stroking its sides, until they reached the west gate of the abbey. Here, the women left the

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[32] Norman Scarfe, *The Suffolk Landscape*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1972), p.156.
[33] Blick, *Pilgrimage Art and Architecture.*
[34] Blick, *Pilgrimage Art and Architecture*.
[35] Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion*, p.44.

procession, reverently entered through the gate to the church of St Edmund and made prayers and offerings before the shrine.[36]

This was such a popular ritual, many women made pilgrimage to Bury, and it was even believed that the saint's aid could be received by proxy. In 1474, Father Peter Minnebode of Ghent made an offering during this ritual "in relief of the desire of a certain Noble Lady".[37] The fertility ritual recalls others used upon the landscape discussed in the previous chapter but, instead of ensuring the ongoing health of the land upon which they were dependent, here women employed ritual to ensure the ongoing health of their family line. Evidence for the ritual is also found in landscape records of Bury St Edmunds. Several fifteenth- and sixteenth-century leases of the Haberdon meadow specify that any tenant of the meadow should keep a white bull ready and available at all times for the ritual.[38] The ritual also hints at the popularity of cults important to women in East Anglia in the Middle Ages, particularly that of Mary, the mother of Jesus.[39]

Woolpit

The shrine of St Edmund was at the centre of one of Suffolk's pre-eminent towns, and the abbey was, arguably, one of the most significant centres of power in Europe. The other important Suffolk town, Ipswich, also had its own pilgrimage site, that of Our

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[36] Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion*, p.45.
[37] Edmund Gillingwater, *An Historical and Descriptive Account of St Edmund's Bury in the county of Suffolk*, (Bury St Edmunds: J. Rackham, 1804), p.149, in Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion*, p.45.
[38] Gillingwater, *An Historical and Descriptive Account*, p.149 in Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion*, p.45.
[39] See Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion*, chapter 6.

Lady of Grace. This shrine did not have the status of that in Bury St Edmunds but, in the early sixteenth century, it was the location of a healing miracle which became famous nationwide. Thomas More described it as the best example of a modern miracle in England and, in the following year, Queen Katherine of Aragon and Cardinal Wolsey both visited the shrine.[40] But what of pilgrimages to shrines in more rural areas of Suffolk? Another shrine to Our Lady, akin to that of Ipswich, was located in the village of Woolpit, further evidence for the cult. It was no coincidence that this was one of the chosen locations for the penance of the Clerk family as the shrine was well known throughout England. The Lollards who attacked the internationally renowned shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham in Norfolk by calling it "the Lefdy of Falsingham", also renamed Woolpit "Our Lefdy of Foulpette."[41]

This did not deter pilgrims, however, and some came from the highest levels of society. Henry VI was known to have visited the shrine whilst staying at Bury St Edmunds and, in 1501, Queen Elizabeth, wife of Henry VII requested a pilgrimage be undertaken for her to "Oure Lady of Woolpitte".[42] In 1481 and 1483, Lord Howard of Stoke-by-Nayland, later to become the Duke of Norfolk, and his wife sent gifts of money, silver and wax to the shrine, whilst Dame Elizabeth Andrews gave a diamond ring.[43] The earliest reference to Woolpit as a pilgrimage shrine, in fact, was a direction by the Bishop of Norwich that the rents, tithes and *oblations peregrinorum*

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[40] See MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors*, pp.143-146.
[41] Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour*, p.129.
[42] B. Woolfe, *Henry VI* (London, 1981), p.367 in Diana Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England*, (London: Hambledon, 2000), p.100; N.H. Nicholas, *Privy Purse Expenses of Elizabeth of York*, (London, 1830), in Clive Paine, 'The Chapel and Well of Our Lady of Woolpit', *PSIAH* 38:1 (1993), p.8.
[43] Paine, 'The Chapel and Well', p.8.

of the church and shrine should be given to the monks of Bury St Edmunds.[44] It has already been noted how the dominance of Bury St Edmunds abbey meant that there were relatively few alternative religious houses in the western half of the county. The abbey thus controlled and benefited from the income of may prosperous, temporal, agricultural communities. It also appears that the abbots may have wished to control the income generated through spiritual means at other religious institutions.

The Woolpit shrine was also popular with people of less elevated status. Margaret Tye of Sudbury requested a pilgrimage to Woolpit in her will, whilst John Sukford of Thelnetham wanted "a suitable pilgrim to go on pilgrimage of the Blessed Mary of Woolpit."[45] This may have been due to the image's reputation for healing. In the late fourteenth century, John Brame, a monk of Thetford Priory, recorded "a woman of Thetford, who became dumb by a disease in her throat, upon whose accounts many gave her money to enable her to go and make her offering to the image of the Holy Virgin at Wulpit in Suffolk."[46] Like the shrine of St Edmund, Woolpit's image of Our Lady was presented in a suitable manner. She was dressed in rich clothes, decorated with brooches, jewels and rosary beads. In front of the image were several banks of burning candles representing pilgrims' prayers.[47] It is also clear that pilgrims visited the image of Our Lady in search of healing rather than a well found just north-east of the church. In more recent centuries it was suggested that the well had been visited

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[44] *English Episcopal Acts*, vi, 'Norwich 1070-1214', ed. C. Harper-Bill , (London: British Academy, 1990), pp.268-9, in Paine, 'The Chapel and Well', p.8.
[45] Northeast and Falvey eds, *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury*, p.94 (166) and p.466 (769).
[46] F. Blomefield, *Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*, II, (London, 1805), p.118, in Paine, 'The Chapel and Well', p.11.
[47] Paine, 'The Chapel and Well', p.8.

by pilgrims as it had a reputation for curing certain eye problems.[48] Surviving evidence from the medieval period, however, does not support this.

It is likely that another reason for the popularity of the Woolpit shrine was its convenient location on the international pilgrimage route which took in St Edmund's shrine and that of Our Lady of Walsingham. This could be especially lucrative for well-positioned churches, and parishioners and churchwardens made great efforts to attract pilgrims, their prayers and their offerings into a church. One such church was that of Holy Trinity, Long Melford, close to Bury St Edmunds. The Lady Chapel was built by a wealthy parishioner, John Clopton, in the fifteenth century. In a memorandum added to his will in 1497, he left 100 marks for "the garnyshynge of oure Ladye Chapel and of the cloister ther abowte."[49] The cloister was a wide ambulatory or "processional" way, which allowed ample space for an easy flow of pilgrims.[50] The 1529 inventory of Melford church shows that this image was as sumptuously dressed as the Woolpit image, with rings, jewelry, silver spoons and buckles adorning both her astonishing array of outfits, and the apron placed before her.[51] Long Melford's Lady Chapel was a very elaborate attraction for pilgrims, but many churches and parishioners used less elaborate methods for attracting the prayers and money of passing pilgrims, and this will be discussed later.

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[48] See above, Chapter 2: Festive Culture ad the Landscape.

[49] *The Visitatione of Suffolk made by William Hervey, Clarenceux King of Arms, 1561 with Additions from Family Documents, Original Wills, Jermyn, Davy and Other MSS*, ed. Joseph Jackson Howard, (Lowestoft and London: Samuel Tymms and Whittaker and Company, 1866), 1:38, in Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion*, p.84.

[50] Rawcliffe, 'Curing bodies and healing souls', p.125.

[51] See Dymond and Paine, eds. *The Spoil of Melford*, pp.13 & 14. For more on this see below, Chapter 4: Objects and Festive Culture.

Local Pilgrimage

Not all pilgrimages across Suffolk were visits to Bury St Edmunds or Walsingham. Many were far shorter, local trips, made by residents of rural Suffolk parishes to small, local shrines. This type of pilgrimage is illustrated by Margery Kempe who was invited to go just two miles from where she lived on pilgrimage to a church of St Michael the Archangel. This is unlikely to have involved an overnight stay, but she still explicitly called it a 'pilgrimage'.[52] The 'long haul' pilgrimage to places such as Compostela, Rome and Jerusalem were certainly the exception rather than the norm, and rewarded the pilgrim with a certain status within their home parish, accordingly. A study of Hindu shrines in India has shown that a long journey to high-status shrines tend to be taken in the hope of spiritual benefit or enlightenment, whilst a journey to a smaller shrine is more likely to be undertaken for a more mundane, problem-solving purpose.[53] In late medieval England, as Diana Webb has stated: "[a] housekeeper would not have gone to Jerusalem in hope of finding her keys- she might spend more than the keys were worth... on a short journey to a [shrine]."[54] Many journeys made by English pilgrims did not take them far outside of their normal context, with many involving a few day's travel at most. Colin Morris has observed that: "local pilgrimage of this sort belongs to a world in which we know that people trusted in the protection of saints of their own region."[55] Dr Edward Powell, Dean of Salisbury in 1533, summed up the essence of local

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[52] Windeatt ed., *The Book of Margery Kempe*, p.360.
[53] Bhardwaj, S.H. *Hindu Places of Pilgrimage in India*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), pp.158-9, 162 in Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England*, p.xii.
[54] Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England*, p.xii.
[55] Morris, 'Introduction' to *Pilgrimage The English Experience*, p.6.

pilgrimage, stating that the essential elements were self-abnegnation and abandonment of familiar ties:

> …whoever goes on pilgrimage to John Thorne, to our Lady of Walsingham, to St Anne in the wood [at Brislington near Bristol], left his father and mother and brethren from the time that he was from home; therefore Our Lord's promise applied to him; therefore, let him put in the box at the shrine whatever he would, he should receive as much in the present world and in the world to come everlasting life.[56]

For parishioners in Norfolk and Suffolk wishing to make a local pilgrimage over twenty shrines existed in East Anglia. As well of St Edmund's shrine and those of Our Lady at Ipswich, Woolpit and Long Melford, other Suffolk pilgrimage sites in Suffolk included: the Holy Roods at Beccles and Framsden; St Mary of Grace at Stonham Aspall; St Margaret's Chapel at Easton Bavents (Southwold); "Cross" at Great Thurlow; The Blessed Rood at Gislingham; Our Lady, Sudbury; Our Lady at Stoke by Clare; St Francis at Dunwich; Holy Rood at Holton; and Holy Rood at Lowestoft.[57] In 1464 a grant was given to the church of St Mary de Pietate at Kersey because "there is a great resort of the faithful on account of the infinite miracles which by the merits and intercessions of the same virgin had been and were being wrought daily by Almighty God at a certain image of her in the said church."[58] Like the shrines at Woolpit and Long Melford, the image at Kersey is another example of devotion to the cult of the Virgin. Evidence for the shrine of the Good Rood at

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[56] J Nicholls and J Taylor, *Bristol Past and Present*, 3 vols, (Bristol, 1881-82), p.124 in Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England*, p.xiv.
[57] Paine, 'Pilgrimage, Saints and Relics'.
[58] Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England*, p.104.

Bramfield can still be seen inside the Church. It would have been a wall mounted crucifix, the outline of which still survives. In 1507, Edmond Clerke of Walberswick bequeathed "to the reparation of Bramfield church 4 pecs tymber ther being and 33s 4d in money into the seelyng of the said church… I bequeath to the emending of the good Rode and hid aungels in Bramfield church 10s."[59] These two shrines may have been small, local affairs, but they would still have generated a constant stream of pilgrims bringing gifts, donations and money into the parish, and benefitting the communities that were based around them.

Provision for pilgrims

So far, this chapter has shown that a pilgrim's journey and their experience on arrival at a shrine was something removed from the quotidian. However, the chapter will now explore pilgrimage from a different viewpoint, that of parishioners encountering pilgrims as they journeyed to or from a shrine. As will be shown, pilgrimage routes crossed through Suffolk and many rural parishioners, therefore, were able to make an income providing for pilgrims' necessary needs. Through this exploitation for financial reasons, pilgrimage became part of many everyday lives.

Whatever the reason for pilgrims crossing Suffolk to visit shrines, it was every Christian's duty to provide charity for them. As part of the seven corporal acts of mercy feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty and shelter to the homeless, and clothing the naked would all apply to those encountering pilgrims and other types of

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[59] NRO, NCC Spyltimbre 7, Edmund Clerke, Walberswick 1507; Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour*, p.133

wayfarer. Burial of the dead may also be required. The Church encouraged both the faithful and ecclesiastical institutions to provide accommodation for, and give assistance, to pilgrims.[60] To receive or assist a pilgrim was promoted as sharing in the merit and virtues of their journey, and was backed up by the assertions of Christ:

> Whoever welcomes you welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes God's messenger because he is God's messenger, will share in his reward… You can be sure that whoever gives even a drink of cold water to one of the least of my followers because he is my follower, will certainly receive a reward." (Matthew 10: 40-42)[61]

Ecclesiastical institutions, particularly monastic hospices provided hospitality and charity for poor pilgrims who could not afford inns, and laymen and women followed their example. One wealthy family in Canterbury put up twenty pilgrims at a time, whilst a Norwich tanner cared for a blind man in his house along with others too poor to fend for themselves.[62] Amongst the miracles ascribed to St Thomas Becket, charity to pilgrims was rewarded; an unnamed man who gave hospitality to sick pilgrims was released from unjust imprisonment.[63]

Although all men and women were encouraged to offer charity to pilgrims, those on pilgrimage also offered seemingly endless opportunities to make money. As they passed through parishes, and once they arrived at a shrine, pilgrims needed provision, and many parishioners could make a steady income doing so. As late as

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[60] Sarah Hooper, *To Be A Pilgrim: The Medieval Pilgrim Experience,* (Stroud, Sutton, 2002), p.110.
[61] Hooper, *To Be A Pilgrim*, p.110.
[62] Robertson, J. ed., *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket*, 7 vols. (London, Longman, 1875-1885), I. p.160 in Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrimage*, p.47.
[63] Robertson (ed.), *Materials*, I., p.278 in Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England*, p.217.

1520, men and women from Bury St Edmunds were being paid to look after pilgrims' staves whilst pilgrims were visiting St Edmund's shrine.[64] Wherever shrines were located, the necessary stalls offering wax and other materials for offerings, souvenirs and foodstuffs came into being. In 1347, Richard Brayleigh, dean of Exeter and parson of the church of Colaton Ralegh complained to the king that a group of men led by a local knight had:

> Come armed… to the chapel of St Theobald, Colaton, annexed to his church, and by grievous threats, demanding, nay extorting, toll and other unwonted customs from men coming to his chapel for the cause of pilgrimage and devotion and veneration to St Theobald… and from others selling victuals in the cemetery… [65]

In the background of this complaint are the men and women providing for the needs of the shrine's pilgrims, and making a modest income doing so. The majority of pilgrims would carry enough cash to see them through their journey; therefore, they were potential customers.

The higher the social status of pilgrims, the more income they were able to provide for those living and working near a shrine or along pilgrimage routes. Henry III visited the shrine at Bury St Edmunds on March 5th 1256, and ordered a daily supply of mackerel, salted or packed in bread, to be sent to him whilst he was in Suffolk and Norfolk during Lent. On 8th March, he rewarded Mabel of St Edmunds, "who had

[64] Historical Manuscripts Commission of Great Britain, *The Manuscripts of Lincoln, Bury St Edmunds and Great Grimsby Corporations: and of the Deans and Chapters of Worcester and Lichfield etc.*, Fourteenth Report, part e, ed. William Dunn Macray, ser. 65, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1895), p.157 in Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion*, p.118.
[65] *Calendars of Patent Rolls, 1345-1348,* p.464-65 in Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England,* p.215.

long served the king in the making of ecclesiastical ornaments".[66] She was to have six

ells of cloth of her choice and rabbit skins for a robe. The king also paid tribute to her

in a letter written from Bordeaux in 1243, ordering "a standard of a good red samite,

well embroidered in gold, as Mabel of St Edmund's shall best be able to manage."[67]

Pilgrims were also potential clients for those living along pilgrimage routes. Most

pilgrims would lodge at some time at an inn, and some inn owners would charge

expensive board for low rate accommodation. At most hostels guests would sleep on

straw-covered floors. Beds were prized objects owned by those who could afford

them. Taverns were known for serving better food, and were far more likely to have

beds. Pilgrims, however, could expect to share a bed with at least one other

traveller.[68]   The provision of bed and board was one way in which Suffolk

parishioners were able to take advantage of pilgrims through the county. For some,

this may have provided a regular income and, therefore, pilgrimage became part of

their everyday livelihood.

Rural Suffolk parishioners and European pilgrimage

Men and women living in Suffolk communities such as Bury St Edmunds, Woolpit and

Long Melford would have come into daily contact with pilgrims, no doubt making an

income providing for them.   Like any other traveler, pilgrims would also need

provision whilst journeying to these centres, providing opportunities for parishioners

in other areas of the Suffolk to make some money. As well as pilgrims crossing the

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[66] Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England*, p.119.
[67] *Calendars of Liberate Rolls, 4, p. 275;* Stacey, RC, *Receipt and Issue rolls for the 26th year of the reign of King Henry III, (*Publications of the Pipe Roll Society, 87, ns, 49, 1987-88), p.87 in Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England*, p.119.
[68] Hooper, *To Be A Pilgrim*, p.119.

county to visit the important shrines of Bury St Edmunds and Walsingham, there is also evidence that, during the fifteenth century, there would have been a steady flow of men and women travelling across Suffolk to leave the county and embark on international pilgrimage. These pilgrims were simply passing through on their way to one of the most major shrines in the Christian world, but this does not mean that churches and lay people were not able to take advantage of them. In fact, for some, particularly the Suffolk coastal parishes, these pilgrims were important sources of income. Some people may even have been entirely dependent upon them for a large part of their livelihood. The National Archive holding C 76/133 m.11 is a licence dated 5th March 1451 for Richard Skilman of Southwold, in the coastal hundred of Blything, to carry 30 pilgrims in the *Mary* of Southwold to Saint James, Galicia in Spain. The Chancery Treaty Rolls of this period also show that Skilman was not the only person from Suffolk to be granted a licence to carry pilgrims. In 1473, Robert Northfolk was given a licence for 60 pilgrims in the *Christopher* of Southwold and, in 1484, Henry Sow was licenced with the *James* of Southwold. The *Trinity* and *Edmund* of Southwold were also granted licences in the same year.[69] Other licences were granted to ship owners and masters from the ports of Ipswich and Woodbridge.[70] These licences are excellent examples of the dependency of mariners on pilgrims. Here, pilgrims have literally become 'commodities' in themselves, the cargo of a trading vessel travelling between the coasts of Suffolk and Galicia.[71]

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[69] Storrs, *Jacobean Pilgrims from England*, pp.181-182; Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour*, p.128.
[70] Storrs, *Jacobean pilgrims from England*, pp. 173, 175, 176, 180, 181, 182.
[71] For further discussion of the impact of the pilgrims as 'cargo' on the local community, see below.

Licences to convey pilgrims were permits obtained by masters or owners of ships from certain ports, allowing them to carry a specified number. The total number of pilgrims carried depended upon the period for which the licence was valid and how often it could be used. Most licences were granted in the early months of the year, January to April, and a few in May or June and, usually, they came with restrictions Holders paid for licences in money or services. Thomas Knapp of Bristol was granted a licence for as many pilgrims as he liked, but he was required to levy 6d to each pilgrim "for the king's use" and the number of pilgrims were to be checked by the mayor. In 1457, one Vincent Pytlesden was given a licence for both commodities and the conveying of pilgrims, and it was granted for services rendered.[72] Some ships would have to give up the trip and yield to prior claims. Richard Skilman's licence, for example, was granted provided that the *Mary* was not requisitioned for any other use by the king. In 1428, two licences were granted providing this did not impede the Earl of Salisbury's expedition to France.[73] John de Vere, earl of Oxford, was a staunch Lancastrian and applied to Henry VI for a licence to sail his *Jesus* of Orwell from Ipswich to Galicia. He promised the king that the ship would be at his disposal in time of need and asked for the licence to be granted without "fine or fee".[74] Pilgrims really were 'commodities' as far as the ship masters or owners were concerned as they would often form only part of the cargo.[75] The majority of licence holders were professional merchants or traders, and very few took private parties. Some licences granted were on a purely commercial basis, given to merchants commonly engaged

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[72] Storrs, *Jacobean Pilgrimage from England*, pp. 69, 74; *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, 1391-1396, p. 572; NA C76/138 m19, 25 in Storrs, *Jacobean Pilgrimage from England*, pp.126, 127.
[73] NA C76/110 m8; C76/110 m11.
[74] NA C76/110 m7 in Storrs, *Jacobean Pilgrimage from England*, pp.69, 115, 120.
[75] For further discussion of this point see below.

in financing, sponsoring or organizing trading ventures. This meant that licence holders came from all areas of society- members of noble families, royal servants or other officials including constables, chamberlains, justices of the peace and tax-collectors. Some were other types of burgess of varying wealth and influence such as mayors and sheriffs, whilst others were seafarers in their own right, or even pirates.[76] All, however, were looking to make income from pilgrims; pilgrimage for them was a way to supplement their livelihoods.

The sailing licences granted to ships sailing from Southwold show that there would have been regular groups of pilgrims travelling across Suffolk, especially the parishes of the Blything Hundred, as part of their journey to St James' shrine at Santiago da Compostela. Although no document survives which records the exact routes they would have taken, it is possible to trace likely courses. Therefore, it is possible to surmise which parishes would be well placed to offer pilgrims food, drink or lodging or encourage them to make other donations. This can be carried out using a variety of maps, roadbooks, and other topographical documents. Figure 4 illustrates the Blything Hundred parishes recorded in each of the sources used to do this. The antiquarian, Alfred Suckling, recorded evidence for a Roman road, mentioning several Blything parishes:

A Roman road has been distinctly traced, leading from the heaths which

surround the surround this place [Dunwich], quite across the country to Bury

St Edmunds... This line of communication...was used by the monarch who

planted Christianity there [Dunwich], and was recognized afterwards as the

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[76] Storrs, *Jacobean Pilgrimage from England,* pp. 66 and 119.
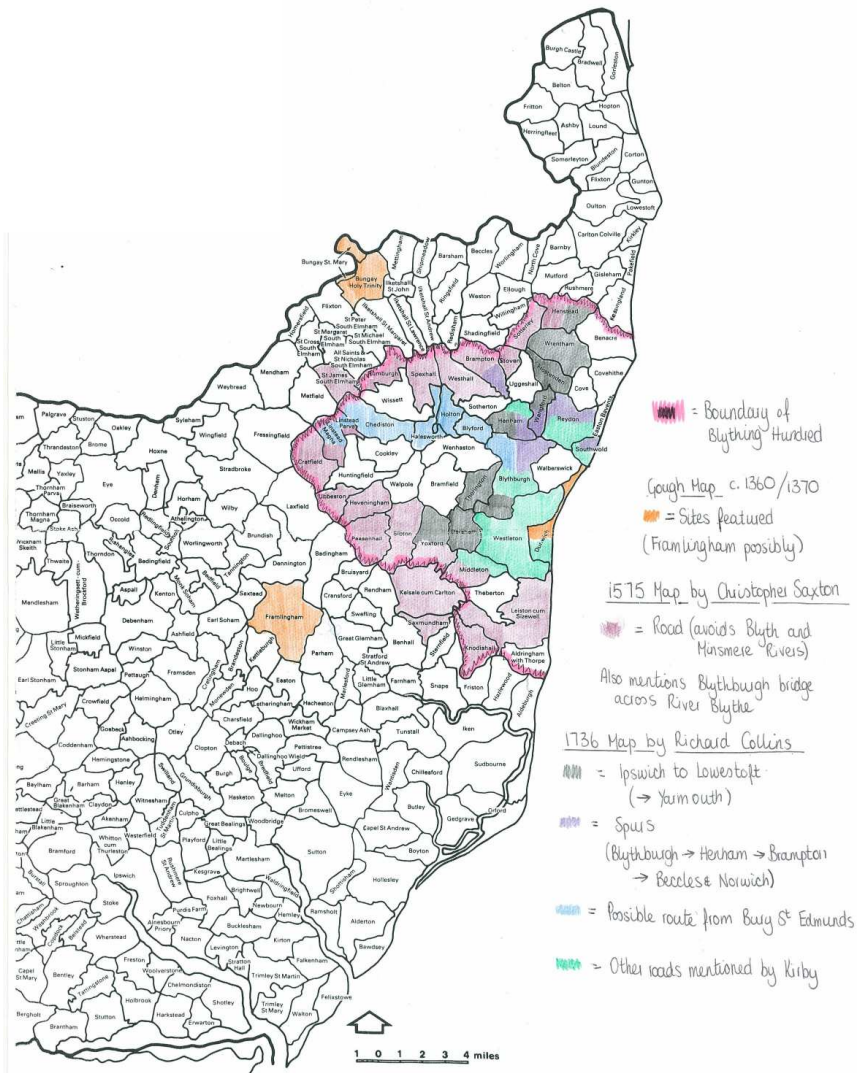
Figure 4: Routes across Blything Hundred

king's road, and the king's highway. In a grant of certain lands in Bramfield by the Master of Metingham College, they are said to abut "super regiam viam ducentum a Donewico usque Bury St Edmundi"...[77]

The importance of Dunwich as centre in fourteenth century is highlighted by its appearance on the Gough Map of England, which is dated from c.1370. The Gough Map also shows the town of Bungay and, of course, Norwich. It is likely that many pilgrims travelling to Southwold and onto Compostela would have visited the shrine of St William in Norwich, and would enter Suffolk on a route through Bungay.

The early eighteenth-century roadbook by John Kirby is one of the first complete surveys of all the roads in the county with descriptions of most parishes. Part of the survey reads:

Yoxford is a thoroughfare Village, the road through it from Saxmundham to Halesworth *[traversing the Ipswich to Yarmouth road]*. On the North-side of this Village is Cockfield-Hall, pleasantly situate in a valley by the side of a Brook; it is now the Seat of Sir Charles Blois, Bart. Here are several other good Houses belonging to private Gentleman and Tradesmen. In this Village are two good Inns of entertainment.

Leaving the Blacksmith's Shop above-mentioned *[in Yoxford],* avoid going right forward to Middleton, but turning to the left over the Brook; come to a Direction Post; here the Road right forward goes to Dunwich, therefore turn on

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[77] "upon the royal way leading from Dunwich unto Bury St Edmunds", Suckling, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Suffolk*, p.230.

the left… At 5m 3f is Blithburgh Church close on the left. At 5m 4½f Blithburgh White-Hart Inn.[78]

As it is likely the routes described in the roadbook were established for many years, it is also likely that late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth century pilgrims would have used them. Therefore the entries are useful for a number of different reasons. Firstly, the full descriptions of both the parishes and the routes themselves show the natural and man-made landscape features which any traveler, including pilgrims, would have relied upon for orientation. These include Wayside Crosses, water-courses, direction posts, large "manor" houses, woodland (particularly ancient trees), stiles and churches. The entries also reference other services that would be important to a traveler including Inns and Blacksmiths.[79] Up until the mid-sixteenth century, a significant percentage of the clientele of these types of business would have been pilgrims. When pilgrimage was declared as unlawful during the Reformation, landlords and others must have noticed a significant drop in their income.

Monastic communities were also important to pilgrims. Blything Hundred was the location of several religious communities which would have been relied upon by pilgrims travelling to and from the coast. A packway running between Blythburgh Priory and Leiston Abbey was even known as the "Pilgrim's Way".[80] Religious communities had a responsibility to tend the poor "who are abandoned by the

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[78] John Kirby, *The Suffolk Traveller: or A Journey Through Suffolk*, SRS, Vol.47, (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2004), p.19.

[79] The roadbook is somewhat reminiscent of the 'guidebooks' which existed before the Reformation and were used by Pilgrims on the most important pilgrim routes, such as Book V of the *Liber Sacti Jacobi* by Aymery Picaud, known as the "Pilgrim's Guide", which described all of the known land routes to Compostela.

[80] Claude Morley, 'The Middleton-Westleton Packway", *East Anglian Miscellany*, July-September 1923, No.6552.

ordinary physicians and surgeons".[81] Monasteries provided hospitality and charity for poor pilgrims who could not afford inns, and charitable work was an accepted routine at hospitals, episcopal households and other ecclesiastical establishments. [82] Rawcliffe has observed that "[there is] a strong possibility that pilgrims travelling to shrines in larger monastic houses actually received some basic medical treatment as well as sharing whatever doles of food which may have been distributed by the almoner. The undernourished in particular probably derived considerable benefit from the largesse of strangers, not least in the many hospitals which sprang up across the region."[83] The same would have been true for any pilgrims passing near the smaller religious institutions across Suffolk. However, like lay people providing hospitality, religious institutions were keen to make an income from passing travellers. Grateful pilgrims may well have offered financial donations on their departure. Some institutions went one step further in order to attract pilgrims and their donations. In a similar manner to Woolpit and Long Melford, the Cluniac Priory of Thetford, as well as offering medical treatment and alms, hoped to attract more of the lucrative international pilgrim traffic on the way to the shrine of Our Lady in Walsingham. They assembled a collection of relics: a piece of Christ's robe, fragments of his sepulcher and the manger in which he was laid as an infant. These drew crowds in search of healing miracles.[84]

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[81] D.W. Amundsen, 'Medieval Canon Law of Medical and Surgical Practice by the Clergy' *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 52 (1978), 23-43 in Rawcliffe, 'Curing Bodies and Healing Souls', p.116.
[82] Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*, p.47.
[83] Rawcliffe, 'Curing Bodies and Healing Souls', p.116.
[84] David Dymond, *The Register of Thetford Priory*, I, Norfolk Record Society 59, (1994), pp.30-31 in Rawcliffe, 'Curing Bodies and Healing Souls', p.125.

But what of Suffolk parishes which were not the locations of monastic institutions? How could they capitalize upon the generosity of passing pilgrims? Philippa Woodcock, in her work on pilgrimage routes through the parishes of early modern Maine in France, has shown that waymarkers on these roads included hostelries, shrines and roadside chapels.[85] Pictures of wayside shrines can be found in images such as that of the Wayfarer in the "Haywain" Triptych by Hieronymous Bosch (1510), which is positioned in a tree. This shrine contains a crucifix so it may also have been referred to as a wayside cross. Whyte has suggested that wayside crosses were sometimes placed on roads leading to pilgrims' chapels, often in the centre of road junctions, perhaps a deliberate channeling of the pilgrim' movement around the structures.[86] In this way, pilgrims were forced to interact with the crosses, structuring their experience of the place to which they were travelling, and deepening the spiritual experience of the journey itself.[87] The pilgrims may also have offered gifts at the crosses either in thanks for a good journey or in the anticipation of successful onward journey.

There are many references to wayside crosses situated in Suffolk parishes. An entry a 1525 survey of Blythburgh reads: "way leading from the cross at the end of the town unto Campysbrygge".[88] This was known as 'Umbelowe' cross and stood at the junction of a lane on the parish boundary known as 'Jolly's Lane' which intersected

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[85] Philippa Woodcock, 'Pilgrimage Routes and the Parish in early modern Maine', *The Parish Church, History and the Landscape'* Series, St Laurence Church, Norwich, 10th September 2008.
[86] Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape*, p.30.
[87] Nicola Whyte, 'Norfolk Wayside Crosses: Biogaphies of Landscape and Place', in Heslop, Mellings and Thöfner eds. *Art, Faith and Place in East Anglia*, p.167.
[88] SRO(I): HA30:50/22/27.6(4).

with the main Ipswich to Yarmouth road.[89] Evidence for a second cross in Blythburgh

is found in a 1515 will when a request was made that a cross be put up in the street

leading to hamlet of Bulcamp.[90] A will also references a cross to be raised for use

between Thorington and Darsham.[91] Nineteenth-century tithe apportion maps,

through their record of field names, are useful sources for landscape uses and

features. In the north of the parish of Westhall, three adjacent apportionments are

named 'Cross Meadow', 'First Cross Piece' and 'Second Cross Piece', which could well

be named after a wayside cross.[92] As well as a role as shrines and, therefore, a

repository for financial gifts, wayside crosses may have been intended as obvious

features designed to stand out in a landscape to show pilgrims they were taking the

right road. They were positioned so that they could be seen a long way off.[93] In this

way, crosses had an obvious practical use, particularly in Suffolk parishes where crops

could be high and, in the absence of other landmark features, it may have been

difficult for pilgrims to find their way.[94]

There are references to bequests to a further 'Holy Rood' or 'Holy Cross' in

Blythburgh, but this is actually the dedication of the wayside chapel at Blythburgh

bridge.[95] As Woodcock has shown, these chapels were important landscape features

for pilgrims, and would have attracted their prayers and gifts. The Blythburgh chapel

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[89] M. Janet Becker, *Blythburgh: An Essay on the Village and its Church*, (Halesworth: Halesworth Press, 1935), p.12.
[90] John Swan, Blythburgh, 1515, SRO(I) IC/AA2/7 f.44 in Middleton-Stewart, *Personal Commemoration in Late Medieval Suffolk*, p.118.
[91] Mareyen Reeve, Darsham, 1503, SRO(I) IC/AA2/4 f.115 in Middleton-Stewart, *Personal Commemoration in Late Medieval Suffolk*, p.118.
[92] SRO(I) FDA278/A1/1a
[93] Hooper, *To Be A Pilgrim,* p.88.
[94] Whyte, 'Norfolk Wayside Crosses', pp.167-8.
[95] Alex Rycherdson, Walberswick, 1511, SRO(I) IC/AA2/5/233 in Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour,* p.33.

no longer exists, but a very good example has been uncovered in the small Suffolk parish of Wickham Skeith in northern Suffolk. During the 1990s, restoration work at Church Farm uncovered what appeared to be a small private chapel dating from the late middle ages. However, further work revealed a pilgrim's purse or scrip folded and placed into the wall. According to the *Liber Sancti Jacobi*, these scrips, which would have been used for carrying alms and other small items, should be conferred upon any pilgrim intending to travel to Compostela with the words:

Receive this scrip, the sign of thy pilgrimage that well chastened and amended thou shalt enter the shrine of St James which thou seekest as a pilgrim and, thy journey accomplished, shall return to us in joy with the help of Him who liveth and reigneth God for ever and ever. Amen.[96]

It is likely that this scrip was placed in the wall of the chapel as an offering either in gratitude or to accompany a request. This suggests that this building is much more likely to have been a wayside chapel for pilgrims. Further evidence for this interpretation was the uncovering of a large wall painting of St Christopher, the patron saint of travelers.[97]

The farm is well placed on a route which would take a pilgrim between the shrine of Our Lady at Woolpit and the shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham, more evidence for this as a wayside chapel.[98] Parishioners would also be keen to encourage pilgrims with their donations and prayers into churches themselves as well as wayside

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[96] *Liber Sancti Jacobi*, I, (Book I), p.152 in Storrs, *Jacobean Pilgrimage from England*, p.73.
[97] It is possible that this image would have been chosen for a private chapel as Medieval tradition held that anyone who saw an image of St Christopher would not die that day. Many men and women would take time at the start of each day to glance at a St Christopher image.
[98] Private communication between chapel owners and the author, January 2011.

chapels.   For pilgrims travelling across Suffolk on their way to Santiago de Compostela, the opportunity to pray and offer a donation to an image of St James may have been welcome.   Surviving wills show that the church of Walberswick housed an image of St James, painted and gilded, whilst the church of Walpole had a light to St James.[99]   The church of Westhall, close to the coast, still houses a roodscreen which contains an image of St James shown as a pilgrim, complete with a staff, wallet and book, and wearing a cockle shell in his hat.[100]

Having crossed Suffolk, stopping at monastic institutions for charity, or frequenting local inns and alehouses, and to offer donations and prayers at wayside chapels, shrines and crosses, pilgrims would arrive in Southwold. They would locate mariners such as Richard Skilman, and arrange their berth across to Galicia.   Skilman would advertise the date on which his sailing would take place. Before this date, he would have made provision for the journey, including engaging a crew and arranging supplies. Both the crew and the provisions would come from the local area. This is further evidence of pilgrimage and the everyday interacting, as the pilgrim trade provided income and employment for those who lived in the local community. It is possible to gain a rough idea of who and what Skilman would be procuring for the journey, and also an idea of how much he would be paying out. No accounts for any of the owners or masters of ships taking pilgrims to Galicia appear to have survived,

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[99] SRO(I) IC/AA2/8, f.88, William Terry, Walberswick, 1507; NRO, NCC Heydon 105, Robert, rector of Walpole, 1507, in Middleton-Stewart, *Personal Commemoration*, pp.229 & 232.
[100] Middleton-Stewart, *Personal Commemoration*, p.238. The choice of the pilgrim St James may have been a deliberate one on the part of the Westhall donors to appeal to passing pilgrims. Whilst St James is a common image on apostle screens, the Westhall images are more unusual as a group. They are: St James, St Leonard, St Michael, St Clement (the patron saint of seafarers), the Transfiguration (Moses, Christ and Elijah) and St Anthony.

but the accounts of a ship named the *Jamys* of Dunwich, which went on the deep sea fishing expeditions to Iceland in 1545 have survived.[101] Appendix 1a shows the crew that was employed for the trip and their agreed wages, whilst Appendix 1b shows the initial provisions of food and drink and the cost of these. It is possible to use the information within these appendices to estimate what provision would have been made for a sailing from Southwold to Galicia with pilgrims. Appendix 1c shows the estimated 1545 costs of the provisions of food and drink on a trip for 30 pilgrims from Southwold to Galicia. Although the figures are for 1545, not the mid fifteenth-century sailing of Richard Skilman, it is likely that pilgrim sailings took place right up until the Reformation, so these figures are not that unrealistic. £114 was a large amount of money for the mid-sixteenth century, and all of it would have entered into the local economy.[102] With the employment provided for the crews of ships, it is evident that pilgrim sailings were extremely important sources of income for coastal communities.

On their return from Compostela into Southwold, either with Richard Skilman or another mariner, the pilgrims would begin the journey home retracing their steps across Suffolk and interacting with the local communities. The parishioners may have hoped that the pilgrims would offer gifts in thanks for a safe journey and sea crossing at the local churches or wayside chapels and shrines. The pilgrims would now carry with them 'souvenirs' of their visit to St James' shrine in the shape of ampullae tokens or badges. These would represent the emblem of Jacobean pilgrimage, the scallop

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[101] E.R. Cooper, 'The Dunwich Iceland Ships', *The Mariner's Mirror*, 25 (1939), pp.170-179.
[102] See, for comparison, the fundraising totals of parish festivities at the time- Chapter 1: The organization of festive culture.

shell, either the natural one which was common in the waters of Galicia, or a model in metal, pottery or jet which they had bought from authorized (or otherwise) stall-keepers outside of the cathedral. This had come to represent St James and his power.[103] Ampoules decorated with the scallop shell, often containing holy water, would be suspended by their handles and worn around the pilgrim's neck. By the late-middle ages, the scallop had become the international sign of pilgrimage, so was not necessarily the sign of a trip to Compostela. For this reason, other shrines incorporated the shell emblem into their own souvenirs.[104] Figure 5 is an example of a pilgrim token from the shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham, which clearly incorporates the shell shape.

Other souvenirs were also available. By the end of the twelfth century, the shrine at Canterbury began mass-producing cheap, lead souvenirs for its pilgrims, beginning a universal trade that would last for more than 300 years. The souvenirs often took the form of hat badges, and would provide a proof of an accomplished pilgrimage and a 'visible passport' that would help ease the journey. The trade in them also brought in revenue to local manufacturers and vendors at shrines and, possibly, along well-known pilgrimage routes. However, the fact that they were designed to be small and portable meant that they were easily lost along the journey, so the presence of a particular badge or ampoule token in a place does not mean that it originated there or that the owner resided in the parish. They are, however,

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[103] Storrs, *Jacobean Pilgrimage from England*, p.72. According to legend he had saved the life of a young nobleman whose horse had carried him out into the sea where he would have drowned. St James, however, intervened. The nobleman emerged from the water with scallop shells clinging to his clothes, and so the shell became St James' emblem.
[104] B. Spencer, *Medieval Pilgrim Badges from Norfolk*, (Norwich: Norfolk Museum Service, 1980), p.16.

Figure 5: Unknown,
Pilgrim's Token from the Shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham, Norfolk,
late fifteenth to early sixteenth century, dimensions unknown,
Colchester and Ipswich Museums Trust.

evidence that pilgrims would have passed through a parish and interacted with the local community. Badges and souvenirs were sometimes viewed as 'secondary relics' of a holy place and which perhaps contained their own 'magic'.[105] Another portable object was the subject of one of Thomas Becket's miracles. A pilgrim from the vicinity of Bury St Edmunds, on his way to Canterbury, bought some gloves in Sudbury, Suffolk, giving a penny and receiving a half-penny in change. The small coin slipped through his fingers and rolled away. The pilgrim exclaimed, "St Thomas' pilgrim has lost his half-penny".[106] When he took out his purse at Rochester to pay for food, he discovered the missing coin, which he then earmarked for an offering at the Canterbury shrine.[107] Not only is this miracle evidence for the power of St Thomas, it also shows two moments when the pilgrim provided cash for the local economy- the purchase of gloves in Sudbury and food in Rochester. The actions of a man taking part in an aspect of festive culture provided for the everyday livelihoods of those he interacted with.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored pilgrimage which, like many other aspects of festive culture, was sometimes seen as a communal activity: a time of fun and merriment, a holiday from working life and a time to see and be seen. Pilgrimage, however, was also a pious practice, undertaken for penance or to seek help from a saint. This dual nature meant that pilgrims were in a liminal state, and liminality was an important

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[105] Spencer, *Medieval Pilgrim Badges*, p.2.
[106] Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England*, p.218.
[107] Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England*, p.218.

part of festivity.[108] Whilst on their journey, pilgrims were God's chosen people; their

actions were for the glory of God. This gave them licence to act in a way which was

different from their normal, everyday routine, and those they encountered *en route*

allowed them to do this. It was every Christian's duty to provide accommodation

for, and give assistance to, pilgrims and to fulfill several of the corporal acts of

mercy. This did not mean that rural parishioners were unable to make an income

from visiting pilgrims. Pilgrims could be commodities and, as such, were financial

assets for a rural parish.

Communities would often grow up around a shrine and provided for the visiting

pilgrims. This could range from the costly, ornaments and clothing for wealthy

pilgrims, to the necessary: lodging, warmth and food. Stalls became commonplace

around a shrine selling essential items to pilgrims, and they developed into the trade

of souvenirs which were proof to others of a pilgrim's piety through their

participation in the ritual of pilgrimage. For the stall holders and craftspeople who

manufactured these souvenirs they were also a source of income. A parish did not

need to be the location of a shrine, however, in order to benefit as many pilgrims

would travel long distances. The owners of inns and ale houses and other trades on

common pilgrimage routes would have profited from the steady income from

pilgrims. These visitors may also have provided for the upkeep of the spiritual side

of the parish. Pilgrims often used wayside crosses and shrines as navigational

points. They may have left financial donations at these or a local church in order to

give thanks for a safe journey so far, or to petition for a good onward journey.

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[108] For more on this see below, Chapter 6: Carnival and the carnivalesque.

Suffolk coastal parishes such as those in the Blything Hundred were well placed to generate a good income from the international pilgrimage trade. Mariners carrying pilgrims to Europe would use local sources for the provisions needed for the crossing, and also employ local people as crew. For these crossings, pilgrims really had become commodities as they were not the only cargo on board. They were part of the income of cross-channel trade.

This chapter has discussed pilgrims moving through a rural landscape providing an income for parishioners, some of which came through the manufacture and sale of small objects as souvenirs. Many types of object played an important part in festive culture. They had ritual significance but were also part of parishioners' everyday lives. Furthermore, objects, like pilgrims in the landscape, were not fixed, but moveable. They could be moved physically, but they also moved in people's perceptions. It is this movement in perception which made them such an integral part of festive culture, and the next chapter will discuss their role in the everyday lives of rural parishioners.

Chapter 4: Use of Objects in Festive Culture

The previous chapter on pilgrimage discussed people moving through rural Suffolk parishes on a journey to offer devotion at different shrines. As part of this ritual process they carried objects with them to offer as gifts at the shrine, or they brought away objects, such as pilgrim badges. These souvenirs, which pilgrims would keep with them every day, would continue to have religious and personal significance throughout the rest of their lives. Personal, everyday objects played a significant role in many aspects of festive culture in rural parishes, particularly those involved in ritual and within the church.

This chapter will discuss the use of a number of personal items within the rituals of festive culture of rural Suffolk parishes. It will start by discussing transubstantiation- a transformation of the everyday at the centre of medieval religion. It will then explore the use of everyday objects within the ritual of the church, before moving on to examine the ways in which objects that may or may not have significant financial value were employed as part of personal devotion and as atropopaic aids. Finally, the chapter will discuss the roles that clothing took on both in public and private devotion, and in the more secular sphere. The argument throughout the chapter is that, whilst many of these objects began with a use in the everyday, domestic sphere, their function would change, and they would become transformed into objects of great religious and devotional significance.

Transubstantiation

A transformative act lay at the heart of medieval religion itself. The act of transubstantiation was the transformation of bread, an everyday object, into the body of Christ. This reenacted Jesus' actions at the Last Supper with his disciples to fulfill his instructions: "Then Jesus took some bread, broke it and gave it to the apostles saying, "This is my body which I am giving for you. Do this to remember me." (Luke 22:19) It was believed that the sacrificed Christ became present on the altar of the parish church and the highlight of the Mass was the elevation of the Host.[1] At this point, the priest would repeat Jesus' words, "Hoc est enim Corpus Meum", which brought about the transformation. He would then raise the Host above his head for adoration by the people.[2] As the high point of the liturgy, bells were rung before the elevation so that the laity could raise their eyes from their prayers and witness the miracle of transubstantiation. The clergy understood that the laity may have difficulty fully comprehending this act. A sermon for the feast of Corpus Christi by John Mirk told the story of a woman who had made the bread to be used in a mass said by Pope Gregory the Great.[3] When Gregory gave her the bread, she laughed aloud and said, "For þou callest Goddys body þat I made with myne owne hands." Gregory prayed to God to convince her otherwise and, immediately, the bread turned into a piece of bleeding flesh. At this, the woman cried out, "Lorde, now I leve [believe] þat þou arte Crist, Goddys Sone of heven, in

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[1] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, pp.91, 95.
[2] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p.95.
[3] Mirk, *Festial*, p.159.

forme of bredde."[4] Exemplars such as this were intended to help the laity accept the miraculous transformation of bread into the body of the Saviour.

The act of transubstantiation was attacked by Lollards, a group who held allegedly heretical beliefs during the late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries. As a religious movement, Lollardy was popular in Norfolk and Suffolk.[5] Lollards did not accept that the consecrated bread was also the body of Christ; the Host did not look like the thing it was. This was in contradiction to the orthodox view, articulated in a medieval prayer as follows:

> Hyt semes quite [white], and is red
>
> Hyt is quike, and seemes dede:
>
> Hyt is flesche and seemes brede
>
> Hyt is on and seemes too;
>
> Hyt is God body and no more."[6]

One Lollard was accused of organizing a series of thefts from London churches in which the Host was reserved in pyxes hanging over the altar. This was after he had boasted that he had eaten "ix goddys at my sopyr that were in the boxys".[7] As early as 1395, Lollards had criticized the Mass for its apparent connections with magic and supernatural: the use of ritual to transform, seemingly, the everyday into the miraculous:

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[4] Mirk, *Festial*, p.159; French, *The Good Women of the Parish*, p.21.

[5] See E. Welch, 'Some Suffolk Lollards', *PSIAH*, 39:2, (1962), pp. 154-165.

[6] R.H. Robbins, 'Popular Prayers in Middle English Verse', *Modern Philology*, 36 (1939) p.344 in Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p.102.

[7] D. Grey ed. *The Oxford Book of Fifteenth-Century Verse and Prose*, (Oxford, 1985) in Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p.101.

That exorcisms and hallowing, made in the church, of wine, bread, wax and

water, salt and oil… be the very practice of necromancy, rather than holy

theology. This conclusion is proved thus. For by such exorcisms creatures be

charged to be of higher virtue than their own kind, and we see nothing of

change in no such creature that is so charmed, but by false belief, the which is

the principal of the devil's craft.[8]

The laity, however, generally appears to have accepted that the consecrated Host

was the source of magical powers, and many superstitions surrounded it. These

were encouraged by the fact that an officiating priest had to ensure that the Host

was not accidentally dropped on the floor, and that none of it was wasted.[9] A

houseling towel was held under a communicant's chin to catch any crumbs. Any

communicants who did not swallow the Host, but left church with it in their mouth,

was believed to be in possession of something powerful. The Host was especially

effective when ground up and used for agricultural problems. It was a charm against

caterpillars, cured swine fever, fertilized the fields, and encouraged bees to make

honey.[10] It is possible that some Suffolk parishioners, dependent as they were on

agriculture, may have been tempted to keep the Host following Mass and use it for

such purposes. With this use, the transformation of an everyday object into a

consecrated element believed to have magical purposes, forms a kind of symbiotic

circle. Through religious ritual, bread was transformed into the body of Christ. This

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[8] H.S. Cronin, 'The Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards', *English Historical Review*, xxii (1907), p.298 in Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p.51.

[9] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p.34.

[10] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, pp.34-5.

was ground up and used as a charm on the fields to ensure a healthy crop of wheat which, in turn, was ground up and transformed into bread.

The fifteenth-century East Anglian play, *The Play of the Sacrament*, like Mirk's sermon of Pope Gregory and the unbelieving woman, dramatizes a refusal to accept the miracle of transubstantiation.[11] The banns of the play declare: "At Croxston on Monday yt shall be sen" (l.74), which has been associated with the village of Croxton near Thetford on the Norfolk and Suffolk border. Dialectal evidence and the use of place-names such as Babwell Mill and Brundish has suggest that it was first performed at Bury St Edmunds.[12] The banns also claim that the play is based upon a miracle "which in Aragon was doon, þe soothe to saye, / In Eraclea, that famous cyte, aright:" (ll.11-12) in 1461. In the play, a groups of Jews, led by Jonathas, are determined to prove that the Host is simply bread, thus confirming the falsehood of Christian belief. They bribe a Christian merchant, Aristorius, to steal and sell them a consecrated Host, and then subject it to a symbolic second Passion. They stab it in each quarter and the centre, repeating the five wounds of Christ. They nail it to a post, echoing the Crucifixion, then remove it, wrap it in a cloth symbolic of grave clothes and place it in a cauldron, reenacting Christ's burial. Finally, they place it in an oven, a parallel with Christ's descent into Hell and the Harrowing. At this point, the oven shatters and an 'image' of Christ appear, preaching to the Jews, a

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[11] Greg Walker ed. *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp.213-233. All quotes taken from this edition.

[12] David Bevington, *Medieval Drama*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), p.756; Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion*, pp.34-40.

representation of the Resurrection on Easter Day.[13] Jonathas and his companions

repent immediately and seek baptism into the Church.

In a similar manner to Pope Gregory's unbelieving woman, the Jews had seen the

Host as Christ "with wondys all bloody" (l.862). Like Pope Gregory, a bishop prays to

Jesus for mercy and forgiveness and, as the stage directions state: "Here shall þe

im[a]ge change again into brede" (l.745)   In the *Play of the Sacrament*, the

conversion of bread into the body of Christ parallels the conversion of the Jews to

Christianity. Because of this, the play can also be seen as deliberate propaganda

against the heretical beliefs of the Lollards.[14] The repentance of the Jews is followed

by a procession to the church for baptism. The bishop's words, "And in wyrshyppe

of thys name gloryows / To syn to Hys honore *Te Deum Laudamus*" (ll.926-7), can be

interpreted as an invitation to the entire audience to join in the procession and

hymn and, in the same manner as Jonathus and his companions, confess their sins.

It is possible that both cast and audience may have entered the local parish church

for the baptism scene.[15] Here, the repentance of the Jews is presented in a way

which can incorporate all sinners, even Lollard heretics.[16]

Representations of the Host as a piece of bleeding flesh was often believed to make

itself visible only to those outside the community of believers. To those who were

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[13] Walker, *Medieval Drama*, p.213.
[14] See Cecillia Cutts, 'The Croxton Play: An Anti-Lollard Piece', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 5 (1944), pp.45-60.
[15] Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion*, p.40.
[16] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p.107.

part of the community, it was seen in the reassuring form of bread.[17] The miraculous

act of transubstantiation, therefore, helped to unite a community, and anyone who

was refused the Eucharist would have become an outsider. Parishioners may have

felt compelled to shun this person from the normal, everyday activities of the parish

community. This rift potential to break apart a community had been brought about

by the transformation of an everyday foodstuff into the most prized object of

religious ritual.

Everyday Objects as part of Religious Ritual

Bread was not only used as part of the Mass. It was also referred to in devotional

instructions such as those for laymen. One version of these instructions, written in

the fifteenth century, explained how laymen could turn their everyday activities into

occasions for prayer and meditation.[18] They recommended that, after dinner, a

husband: "make a cross on the table out of five breadcrumbs; but do not let anyone

see this, except your wife; and the more silent and virtuous she is, the more heartily

you should love her in Christ."[19] Here, the husband and wife partook in a small act of

religious ritual in an everyday setting using an everyday object. The use of bread

would, at the same, have reminded them both of the Eucharist and Christ's sacrifice

upon the cross.[20] Although these instructions required the wife to be silent, women

were not always silent about their desires for some kind of personal involvement

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[17] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p.105.

[18] W.A. Pantin, 'Instructions for a Devout and Literate Layman' in *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays presented to Richard William Hunt*, ed. J.J. Alexander and M.T. Gibson, (Oxford: OUP, 1979), pp.398-422, in French, *The Good Women of the Parish*, p.180.

[19] Pantin, 'Instructions for a Devout and Literate Layman', p. 400 in French *The Good Women of the Parish*, p.180.

[20] French has also noted that the editor of the instructions comments that the wife's silence might have been a sign of her willingness to put up with her husband's religious eccentricities. French, *The Good Women of the Parish*, p.180, n.4.

with religious ritual. As part of their last will and testaments, many women and men requested that a variety of everyday objects be adapted for use in important religious ceremonial. These requests were examples of pious bequests, but they also made financial sense for the parish as the laity were expected to provide a staggering number of portable items for the church. These included, amongst other things: a chalice; an altar frontal and three cloths for the high altar; a censer; a lantern to light and a bell to go before the Blessed Sacrament over the High altar; a Lenten veil; a set of banners for processions; a holy water vat and a sprinkler; a paxbred for the kiss of peace at the Mass; and a candlestick for the paschal candle.[21] All these items, of course, wore out and needed to be replaced. Understandably, Suffolk wills include bequests such as that of Robert Randolf who left a belt with silver decoration to Halesworth church in 1466 with orders that it should be used to make a pax, and John Cary who, in 1532, left a goblet also to make a pax for Cookley church.[22]

Women bequeathed more household items than men. The Bible taught that the church was God's house. Thus to take care of the church honoured God, as well as benefitting parishioners' souls and the souls of their loved ones. Women, therefore, took care of God's house as they would their own.[23] Hence it is only logical that they would want their own household items to be part of the Mass and close to the act of transubstantiation. Most commonly women's bequests were sheets and table cloths. In 1469, Elizabeth Morell of Halesworth bequeathed linen cloths to the high altar and the altar of John the Baptist in her local church. It is likely she intended these to be

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[21] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p.133.
[22] NRO, NCC Jekkys 128, Robert Randolf, Halesworth 1466; NCC Alpe 25-5, John Cary, parson, Cookley 1532 in Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour*, p.189.
[23] French, *The Good Women of the Parish*, pp. 18, 19.

altar coverings.[24] In the same way Elizabeth Hungyre left a cover and a sheet "to the

perpetual use of Thwaite church."[25]   Women were also in a good position to know

what was most needed by the church, which were not necessarily expensive items.

In 1465, Agnes Huykton left a tablecloth to the altar of Clare church, whilst Margaret

Sketh bequeathed to Stanton church a sheet "for use in making a cope."[26] Both these

items would have been elevated from their relatively lowly status as everyday objects

to far higher significance as they were used in the most important ritual of the liturgy.

Churchwardens' accounts show that women were often responsible for the care of

church goods, and that they were able to adapt their domestic skills to serve the

church and God. In many parishes, women, such as Leticia Collarde of Thorington,

were paid for washing the church linen.[27] This employment may well have been an

important part of Leticia's household finances, but it also indicates a more intimate

connection with ceremonial. Charge of the church laundry was an opportunity for

some parishioners to come into close contact with items which had directly touched

the Host and influenced "the splendour of the Mass."[28] The churchwardens' accounts

of Walberswick show a close network of women employed for washing and repair of

the church linen and other items relating to devotional and ceremonial objects. From

1460 to 1482, Parnell Henby was paid as the church laundress.[29] In 1482 she was

recorded as working with Isabel Pye who repaired the parish's vestments.[30] After

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[24] SRO(I), IC/AA2/2/191, Elizabeth Morrell, Halesworth 1469 in Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour*, p.207.
[25] Northeast and Falvey eds. *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury*, p.453 (745).
[26] Northeast and Falvey eds. *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury*, pp. 164 (276), 429 (711).
[27] ERO D/DL E55/2, fol. 5.
[28] French, *The Good Women of the Parish*, p.30.
[29] SRO(I) FC 185/E1/1, fols. 33, 50, 55, 61, 68, 73, 79, 84, 88, 92, 96, 102, 116, 125, 138, 145, 159, 164.
[30] SRO(I) FC 185/E1/1, fol. 164.

1482, Isabel took over the laundry and continued with the repairs.[31] In 1486, Isabel's

kinswoman, Elizabeth Pye, succeeded her,[32] and, in 1492, she, in turn, was succeeded

by Isabel Passchelew.[33] Like Isabel Pye, Isabel Passchelew had carried out sewing

duties for the church, providing a three-dimensional image of St John with clothes.[34]

Clearly, the care of important festive and ritual items was considered to be of such

significance that these duties were passed on only to family members, close working

acquaintances, or someone who had previously proved themselves in another area.

The work of church laundress and needlewoman was one of great trust and respect,

and gave the women who carried it out the knowledge that they had been entrusted

with the care of important ritual items.

Women, therefore, were in a unique position to advise upon the care of bequests

following "a life time of cleaning up after clumsy priests and clerks and the residue of

mass candles."[35] In their wills they sometimes included instructions for the

continuing longevity of items. Dame Margaret Choke of Ashton in the diocese of

Bath and Wells, for example, left valuable items of clothing to her parish church and

instructed that, when not in use, they were to be occupied on a bed in the chantry

house to keep them from moths.[36] Perhaps women did not entirely trust male

churchwardens, who did not have the same first-hand experience as them, to have

suitable consideration for fine textiles. Women's domestic roles also helped them be

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[31] SRO(I) FC 185/E1/1, fols. 138, 184.

[32] SRO(I) FC 185/E1/1, fol. 184.

[33] SRO(I) FC 185/E1/1, fols. 184, 188.

[34] SRO(I) FC 185/E1/1, fol. 217. French, *The Good Women of the Parish*, p.30; Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour*, p.212.

[35] French, *The Good Women of the Parish*, p.43.

[36] *Somerset Medieval Wills 1383-1500*, ed. F.W. Weaver, Somerset Record Society, 16 (1901), vol. 1, pp.244-45 in French, *The Good Women of the Parish*, p.44.

creative at adapting their everyday objects into items which could be used as part of religious ritual. As well as the table cloths and sheets left to be used as altar coverings, napkins were intended to be used as a corporass (a cloth holder for the host). Janet Yngyll left her kerchief to be a corporass, whilst Agnes Sygrave bequeathed "to the high altar of Stowe (Lincs) my best sheet to be an altar cloth, and my best kerchief to be a corporass."[37] In Suffolk, Margaret Wilkinson left St Edmund, Southwold, a cover of valuable tapestry works to be spread before the High Altar on 'good days'.[38] Margaret Hylle of Westhorpe distinguished between the importance of the altars in her parish church and the quality of her household linens when she bequeathed "to the altar of Westhorpe St Mary a diaper cloth; to the altar of St James another diaper cloth, of second quality."[39] Clearly, she felt that the high altar could only be honoured with the more valuable of her personal belongings, whilst a side altar could make do with the less expensive.

Reliquaries

It is clear that Suffolk parishioners desired their own household objects to be part of the liturgy and hence close to the Host. Some people also desired to have important ritual items close to their person. The previous chapter discussed the importance of relics to pilgrims, but some relics were kept for personal aid and devotion. Within the Paston circle, William Haute[40] owned a "piece of stone on which the Archangel

[37] *Lincoln Wills: 1427-1532*, ed. C.W. Foster, Lincoln Record Society, vol. 3, 24 (1930), pp.79-80, p.143 in French, *The Good Women of the Parish*, p.44.

[38] NRO, NCC Robinson 55, Margaret Wilkinson, Southwold 1520 in Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour*, p.223.

[39] Northeast and Falvey eds. *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury*, p.5 (4).

[40] Father of Sir John Paston's fiancée, Anne.

Gabriel descended when he saluted the blessed Virgin Mary."[41] Sir John Fastolf held

an arm of St George which he gave to the guild of St George in Norwich and is also

known to have owned a finger of John the Baptist.[42] However, it is unlikely that he

would have carried a holy arm and finger with him as he performed his everyday

activities. Another of his greatest treasures, valued at £200, was a cross and chain

which contained a piece of the True Cross, and which he wore "dayly aboute hys

nek".[43] This cross and chain was an expensive piece of jewellery, but it was also a

reliquary which allowed the relic of the True Cross to be worn about the neck and,

therefore, to be present in everyday life. It is may be that Fastolf's reliquary was very

much like a reliquary found in the Suffolk parish of Clare.[44] This is made of gold, set

with pearls and was, originally, enameled. Inscribed with "Inri" (*Iesus Nazarenus Rex*

Iudeorum) above the cross, it is suspended by two rings from a twisted wire chain,

which would enable the cross to be worn for personal devotion and display. Behind

the cross itself is a cavity where minute fragments of wood and stone were found

when the cross was discovered.[45] This indicates that it is indeed a reliquary cross.

Such reliquaries were intended to be on display, and they had a multi-faceted role.

First, like the relics adored by pilgrims, they were apotropaic aids and, as such, were

bequeathed to churches in hope of future interventions from the

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[41] *Testementa Vetsuta*, ed. N.H Nicholas, (1826), p.300 in Colin Richmond, 'Religion and the Fifteenth-Century English Gentleman', *The Church, Politics and Patronage*, ed. R.B. Dobson, (Gloucester: Sutton, 1984), p.197.

[42] Mary Grace, ed. 'Records of the Guild of St George in Norwich, 1389-1547', in *Norfolk Record Society Publications*, ix (1937), pp. 23, 31 in Richmond, 'Religion and the Fifteenth-Century English Gentleman', p.197.

[43] Magdalene College, Oxford, *Fastolf Papers*, 70 in Richmond, 'Religion and the Fifteenth-Century English Gentleman', p.197.

[44] In the fifteenth century, Clare castle belonged to Richard, Duke of York, with whom Fastolf was closely connected.

[45] John Cherry, 'Dress and Adornment', p.332 in Marks ed. *Gothic: Art for England*.

saints. They were also valuable heirlooms as is shown by the will of Sir Robert

Radcliff of Hunstanton, Norfolk, who died in 1468:

> Also I will that all suche Reliques as be within a purse brodered with golde and
>
> perle with all Reliques thereby hanging be in the keeping of my saide daughter
>
> Anne so that she deliver it and them to my saide daughter Elizabeth in tyme of
>
> need whann soever she requireth to have them. And so, in tyme of need to be
>
> comen, to them bothe as they wolle have my blessing.[46]

Their spiritual significance was not the only reason for reliquaries' value. They were

simultaneously status symbols, financial assets and fashion accessories.[47]

The very nature of such reliquaries meant that they were only within the personal

reach of the nobility, gentry and financially well-off. Very few rural Suffolk

parishioners would have access to relics such as these outside of churches. But other

everyday objects were revered as relics. In a similar manner to the Host, candles

were imbued with significant powers. In the first of five prayers of blessing during

the festival of Candlemas, apotropaic powers were attributed to the wax: "whenever

it shall be lit or set up, the devil may flee away in fear and with all his ministers, out

of those dwellings, and never presume again to disquiet your servants."[48] The

blessed candles were taken away from the ceremony, lit during thunderstorms or

times of sickness, and placed in the hands of the dying. This distribution of holy

candles, and the subsequent belief of protection for the laity against hostile and evil

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[46] PRO, Probate 11/11, do. 185 in Richmond, 'Religion and the fifteenth-century English Gentleman', p.197.
[47] Marks, 'An Age of Consumption: Art for England c.1400-1547', p.22.
[48] *Missale ad Usum Insignis et Praeclare Ecclesiae Sarum*, ed. F. H. Dickinson, (Burntisland, 1861-83), col. 697, pp.24-9 in Duffy *Stripping of the Altars*, p.16.

forces, became the most important aspect of Candlemas for most people.   Another of John Mirk's sermons, for Candlemas, told the story of a woman who was unable to attend the festive celebrations in her church. She fell asleep and had a dream of the heavenly celebration of Candlemas. Christ was the priest and a company of angels sang Candlemas antiphons, whilst the Blessed Virgin led the procession and offered a candle. An angel gave the dreamer a candle to offer in her turn to the priest but she refused to part with so great a relic. The angel tried to wrest it from her grip, and the dreamer awoke to find a broken candle stump in her hand. This piece of holy candle was henceforth revered as "a relyck".[49]

Personal reliquaries were also objects which could be used for private devotion, a form of ritual which could be carried out domestically. Private devotion required no priest, no building and no special equipment, simply the mind's ability to visualize the object of devotion. Sometimes this was the crucified Christ or the Virgin and child. Although prayer and meditation could take place without images or another focus, in practice many different types were used. Jewelled reliquaries were unlikely to have been used by ordinary people for everyday devotions. Other small, portable aids used included illuminated Books of Hours and Primers, sometimes with separately inserted images, folding images with painted or sculpted imagery, or single images such as sculpted figures.[50]

One object which well illustrates the type of portable devotional image rural Suffolk parishioners may have used for private, everyday devotion is now kept in the

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[49] Mirk, *Festial*, pp.58-59.
[50] John Cherry, 'Dress and Adornment', p.334.

archives of Hatfield House. It began life as a playing card; what was, originally, intended as the front displays three symbols which can be identified as hearts. Yet the card has been transformed, physically, to give it a whole new role; it has moved from the everyday, secular sphere to the ritual, religious sphere. Most early playing cards were blank on the reverse side. The blank side of the Hatfield card has been used to draw a traditional crucifixion group including the flanking figures of the Virgin Mary and St John the Evangelist. The drawing has, in fact, been made to resemble a religious triptych, framing the figures with columns and folding the two ends of the card to mimic the effect of hinged wings. The card has also been cut to emulate the rounded arch-shape of a triptych altarpiece.[51]

In the drawing of the crucifixion, an application of red pigment highlights the flagellation of Christ and the flow of blood from the five wounds. The five wounds became the centre of an important devotional cult during the fifteenth century. The *Play of the Sacrament* is an example of its incorporation into art forms of the time. Another is a prayer card from *The Lewkenor Hours*, which have may have had the same function as the Hatfield card.[52] It is very likely that the *Lewkenor Hours* prayer card originated as a pilgrimage souvenir sold at the shrine at the Cluniac priory of Bromholm in Norfolk (see Figure 12). Here, the monks had been give a relic of the True Cross which became know, nationally, as the Rood of Bromholm. On the prayer card, the rood is shown within a heart shaped frame representing Christ's sacred

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[51] Richard L. Williams, 'Contesting the Everyday: The Cultural Biography of a Subversive Playing Card' in *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and its Meanings*, ed. Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p.241.
[52] Lambeth Palace Library (MS 545) in Eleanor Townsend, 'Pilgrimage' in Marks and Williamson eds. *Gothic: Art for England*, p.435.

heart. Around the frame is the text of a hymn which was used at Bromholm. The *Hours* also contain a prayer card depicting the wound in Christ's side.[53] Of the five wounds, the wound in Christ's side drew the most attention as it was believed that it afforded access to His sacred heart.[54] For this reason, the wound was seen as the most potent source of spiritual power, and it was believed that contemplation of the wounds would bring indulgences. Meditation using prayer cards such as that in *The Lewkenor Hours* and the Hatfield card would, therefore, be beneficial for one's eternal soul. The Heart of Christ, itself, was also the subject of devotional literature, which may explain the choice for the Hatfield card of the suit of hearts.

The small scale of the Hatfield playing card image makes it ideal as a portable image. It is also free-standing when the 'wings' are set at about a 45 degree angle. This means it could have been stood upon a table, whilst the devotee knelt before it creating a sense of subordination and reverence.[55] This represents an enormous development from the card's original everyday, secular purpose to an item as an important devotional focus in the private, religious sphere. The small scale and portability of the card may also be a clue as to its survival over nearly 450 years. It is connected in the Hatfield archive with a letter written in 1571 from Sir Owen Hopton, Lieutenant of the Tower of London, to the Earl of Leicester. By this time, Sir Owen was lord of the Suffolk parishes of Blythburgh, Easton Bavents, Walberswick, Leiston, Wenhaston and Westhall. In the letter, Sir Owen describes how he had confiscated

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[53] Townsend, 'Pilgrimage', p.435 (326).
[54] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, pp.238-48; Williams, 'Contesting the Everyday', p.249.
[55] Williams, 'Contesting the Everyday,' p. 252.

the two enclosed 'pictures' from two of the Duke of Norfolk's men. The Duke had

recently been charged with treasonous activity resulting in the Catholic Ridolfi plot.

Hopton wrote: "…I have sent you a picture of Christ, which was in Loder's comb case,

whereby is partly seen the lewdness of his religion."[56] It is likely that the Hatfield card

is the one described in this letter. The letter may also provide evidence as to why the

card was not only cut at the side to create an arch-shape but also, judging by the

position of heart symbols, at the two short ends to enable the folded card to fit into a

comb case.[57] In 1571 Parliament passed 'An Acte agaynste the bringing in and putting

in Execution of Bulls and other Instruments from the Sea of Rome'. It set its sights on

objects that were part of an expanding Catholic smuggling operation. Section 4 of

the Act concerned: "Any Token or Tokens thing or Thynges called or names by the

Name of an Agnus Dei or any Crosses Pyctures Beades of such lyke vayne and

superstitious thynges from the thynges from the Bysshop or Sea of Rome, or from

any person or persons auctorized or clamyng aucthoritye by or from the sayd

Bysshop or Sea of Rome to consecrate or halowe the same."[58] Anybody receiving any

of these would be liable to forfeiture of "lands, tenements, goods, and chattels". The

Hatfield card may not, on the face of it, appear to fall within the provision of the Act

but Sir Owen's cautious actions of removing the card and passing it to higher

authorities stem from the suspicion of Lowther himself through his connections with

the Duke of Norfolk.[59] Today this card is an exceedingly rare example of cheap and

portable devotional imagery. However, before the Reformation, it is likely that many

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[56] Hatfield House Cecil Papers 6/143 in Williams, 'Contesting the Everyday', p.242.
[57] Williams, 'Contesting the Everyday', p.243.
[58] Alexander Lurders et al, eds. *The Statutes of the Realm*, 12 vols, (London, 1810-28), vol. 4, pp. 528-31 in Williams, 'Contesting the Everyday', p.244.
[59] Williams, 'Contesting the Everyday', p.245.

such objects existed for ordinary people who wished to include daily devotion within their everyday lives.

Jewellery

A reliquary could be a valuable item as a religious, devotional object. It could also have financial value if it was designed to take the form of an item of jewellery. Equally, jewellery was amongst the most precious items women owned for personal reasons. In a similar manner to candles, some jewellery was believed to have magical powers. Girdles symbolized faith as legend had it that Mary threw down her girdle to Thomas as proof of her assumption into heaven.[60] John Bakhot of Mildenhall left his best silver girdle to the church with instructions that "one of the parish clerks of Mildenhall to have the girdle on the vigil of the said SS Ed' and Nicholas each year…to the praise and honour of the saints."[61] Madam Broke bequeathed a silver and enameled girdle to the Lady Chapel of Long Melford church.[62] Women valued girdles, especially during medical situations, and 'lying-in' girdles were given to pregnant women. Some girdles were made of precious metals and stones; others were made of paper and inscribed with a religious text believed to provide a talismanic form of protection during childbirth.

Many items of jewellery and precious stones were held to be apotropaic.   Medieval lapidaries claimed that coral would stop bleeding and excessive menstruation, whilst beads of jet provoked menstruation and discerned virginity in women. Amber beads,

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[60] French, *Good Women of the Parish*, p.47.
[61] Notheast and Falvey eds. *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury*, p.132 (229).
[62] Dymond and Paine eds. *The Spoil of Melford*, p.13. The girdle was stolen in a robbery in 1532.

like the girdles, helped pregnant women with childbirth.[63] Such gifts may well have been given to a saint's image in thanks for successful intervention, or in hope of intervention in the future, both for the donor or the donor's loved ones. Even jewellery which, when it was made, may well have been intended for an entirely domestic situation, contained religious imagery. The newly-wedded Margaret Paston gave her husband a ring engraved with her name saint who was also the patron saint of childbirth.[64] This would remind him of her when they were apart, but would also be to implore the saint for her blessing to make their marriage a successful one. A similar ring has been found in the Suffolk parish of Covehithe (see Figures 6a and b). Now owned by the Colchester and Ipswich Museum service, it is made of gold and is about 2cm in diameter. Inscribed upon the hoop in black letters is the inscription "a vous ma gre" ("to you my accord"). The ring is of a type known as "iconographic" because it also has a finely engraved scene of the Annunciation in two panels.[65] The inscription, however, is entirely secular, giving the ring an interesting combination of non-religious inscription with a devotional scene. The inscription suggests the ring may have been a love-token, or a token of gratitude. The engraving, therefore, may have been chosen to ask for the Annunciate Virgin's blessing on a new partnership of some kind.

As a precious object both financially and personally, jewellery was bequeathed by parishioners to images of saints in their parish church. These three-dimensional images became "the visible friends" in a tangible and rounded form, with whom a

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[63] *English Medieval Lapidaries*, ed. Joan Evans and Mary S. Serjeantson, Early English Text Society 190, pp. 53, 77, 125, 32 in Katherine French, *Good Women of the Parish*, p.47.
[64] Richard Marks, 'An Age of Consumption', p.22.
[65] John Cherry, 'Dress and Adornment' in Marks ed. *Gothic: Art for England*, p.333.

Figures 6a and b: Unknown, Ring, early fifteenth century, Gold, diam. 2cm, bezel h. 1cm, w. 0.9cm, Colchester and Ipswich Museums Trust.

relaxed, though one-sided, relationship could be established. They built a bridge between this world and the next."[66] The gifts were either worn by the image or attached to an "apron" below the image.[67] In 1529, Eleanor Nicoll left her wedding ring to the image of St Sidwell in Morebath, Devon, "the wyche ryng dyd helppe make seynt sydwyll ys scowys". The ring was silver and melted down to make part of a silver shoe, which was attached to the foot of the image as a sign of devotion.[68] In Suffolk, Isabel Smyth bequeathed two rings and a silver brooch to the image of Our Lady at Woolpit.[69] Rumburgh Priory, in the east of the county, housed an image of St Bega, and a 1482 inventory lists her ornaments: two pairs of [cups] for [the tribute], two tunics of black velvet, two stones of beryl enclosed in silver with other ornaments.[70] In a similar manner to the *Lewkenor Hours* prayer card and the Hatfield card, jewellery could be a devotional focus for anyone meditating before a saint's image. One of the best examples of gifts to an image in Suffolk comes from Holy Trinity, Long Melford. A 1529 inventory shows that the image of the Virgin, befitting her status as Queen of Heaven, had been given a wardrobe and jewellery which would have been the envy of many women.[71] These included: three rings; two little silver rings; a silver rosary; a piece of coral enclosed in silver; a silver buckle; a pair of small jet beads; and a piece of coral enclosed in silver.[72] Long Melford was a parish made wealthy by the cloth weaving trade. Surviving inventories show that other rural Suffolk parishes did not have such well-dressed images. But, like those in less

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[66] Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour*, p.218.

[67] Dymond and Paine, *The Spoil of Melford Church*, p.13, n.62.

[68] J. Erskine Binney, ed. *The Accounts of the Wardens of the Parish of Morebath, Devon, 1520-1573*, (Exeter, 1904, Devon Notes and Queries, supp. vol. 1904-04) in Duffy, *Voices of Morebath*, p.75.

[69] Northeast and Falvey eds. *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury*, p.82 (142).

[70] Walker, *A Rumburgh Priory Inventory*, p.43.

[71] See above, Chapter 3: Pilgrimage.

[72] Dymond and Paine, *The Spoil of Melford Church*, pp. 13 & 14.

wealthy parishes, the Long Melford parishioners gave what they could to revere the saint, and the inventory records who the donors were. The Long Melford inventory therefore also acts as a type of bede-roll to testifying to people's generosity.[73]

Clothing

Clothing was another type of personal item which was donated to the parish church to be used at important feasts and during religious ritual. Those who bequeathed these items wanted to ensure that, like household objects, things that had had close physical contact with them during their lifetime would transform into important ceremonial items after their death. Dame Margaret Chocke had good reason to be concerned about the ongoing care of her bequests as she left a gown of blue velvet and a kirtle of blue damask to "lie before the high altar in principal feasts and other times."[74] In Suffolk, Sir John Heveningham left the church of St Mary in Heveningham a black velvet gown to be refashioned as a cope and a vestment.[75] Elizabeth Tymperley of the parish of St Michael's in East Hamsted, Buckinghamshire, left what may have been her most valuable item of clothing, both personally and financially to the church when she requested: "unto the church of Savret my wedding gown to make a vestment thereof."[76] By doing this, she was ensuring that an item of

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[73] A bede roll was a common practice through which a list of benefactors to the church was placed on a roll, and the entire list then read from the pulpit perhaps four times a year. The congregation would then pray for those named. The lists of those parishioners who gave gifts to the fundraising efforts in Brundish during 1542 is also reminiscent of a bede-roll. See above, Chapter 1: The organisation of festive culture.

[74] *Somerset Medieval Wills*, vol. 2, p.52, in French, *Good Women of the Parish*, p.44. For further discussion of clothing in drama and dramatic ceremonies, see below.

[75] NA PCC HOgen 39, Sir John Heveningham, Heveningham, 1531 in Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour*, p.203.

[76] PRO Prob 11/19 fol. 70v in French, *Good Women of the Parish*, p.44.

clothing which began as an important part of a ceremony of one Holy Sacrament would continue its life as part of many other Sacraments.

These bequests show that clothing made from costly and luxuriant fabrics was bequeathed for use within the church as it was believed that only the most expensive and precious were fit for God. The same fabrics were also the least attainable for ordinary people as recurrent sumptuary laws of the fifteenth century attempted to ensure that the dress of any particular social category should not surpass that worn by the class immediately above.[77] In 1402, the Commons petitioned that no-one below banneret should wear cloth of gold, velvet, crimson cloth and velvet motley. A 1463 sumptuary law forbade damask and satin to be worn by the rank of esquire or gentleman or lower. Fustian, bustian (strong linen fabric and cotton fabric) and fur (unless it were black and white lamb) were prohibited for those with an income of less than 40s a year.[78] In 1465 legislation was introduced stipulating that knights below the rank of lord should not wear cloth of gold, cloth decorated with gold, sable (an exclusive fur), doublet velvet, nor should they dress in purple. Those below the rank of knight were forbidden on pain of a sizeable fine to wear patterned velvet, satin, and damask unless they were royal officials or had possessions worth more than £40 a year. By 1483, there were greater restrictions which forbade all subjects, except royalty, to wear cloth of gold or purple silk. Furthermore, excepting the king's esquires, no one below the rank of

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[77] Thomas Tolley, 'Visual Culture' in *Gentry Culture in Late Medieval England*, ed. Raluca Radulescu and Alison Truelove, Manchester Medieval Series, (Manchester: Manchester University Press), 2005, p.170, p.180.
[78] F.E. Baldwin, *Sumptuary Legislation and Personal Regulation in England* (Baltimore, 1926), 103-5 in Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour*, p.197.

knight was permitted to wear velvet, damask or satin in their gowns.[79] Within the house of God, however, it was a different matter. Late medieval church inventories are full of vestments made from fabrics specified in the sumptuary laws. In Suffolk, the 1531 inventory from St Mary, Huntingfield records a purple velvet coat for the image of St Andrew.[80] The 1547 inventory of Holy Trinity, Blythburgh mentions a suit of green silk with gold, a suit of black silk with gold, an altar vestment with blue silk and gold stars, a vestment of red damask with gold flowers, a vestment of yellow satin with arrows, a vestment of black velvet, and a vestment of sandy velvet with ostrich feathers.[81] Visually, the use of these types of fabric for both the images and the clergy would remind parishioners that the clothing of those serving, or chosen by, God was far removed from legally acceptable everyday wear. Experiences within the church were to be something very different from experiences outside.

Whilst sumptuary laws were intended to control the fabric that people wore, there were also expectations of moral associated with dress, especially regarding women. In the fifteenth century, John Gybson, a Premonstratensian canon in north Yorkshire, wrote a confession manual which addressed men and women's different moral failings.[82] It also differentiated between married and single women's sins. The manual specified questions for confessors to ask single and married women, and married men and servants when they went to confession.[83]   Gybson assumed that both married and single women were prone to loving nice clothes, but he ascribed

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[79] Tolley, 'Visual Culture', p.170.
[80] SRO(I) FC 57/A1/1, p.42.
[81] Suckling, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Suffolk*, vol. II, p.156.
[82] BL Sloane MS 1584 in French, *The Good Women of the Parish*, p.207.
[83] BL Sloane MS 1584, fol. 9b in French, *The Good Women of the Parish*, p.207.

different motives to each. For single women, clothing was "for the pleasure of young women rather than of God", whilst married women chose clothing "for the pleasure of the world or of the people."[84] In the fourteenth-century *The Book of the Knight of the Tower*, the knight explicitly contrasts the sin of pride with the good work of clothing the naked when he narrates the story of a woman who owned many clothes. The Devil took her to hell when she died because she had not given her extra clothes as charity:

> And the en[e]my or devylle cryed with a hyghe voys [voice] & said/ Sire this women had ten paire of gownes long & short/ And ye know wel she had with half of the ynough [enough]/ that is a long gowne/ two kyrtells & two cottes [coats] hardyes/ or two short gownes/ & therewith she might haue be pleased & suffised [satisfied].[85]

The Devil went on to add that the woman should have given some of this clothing to the poor to keep them warm.

Other conduct literature and sermons recognized that clothing marked women's position within society. A passage from *The Book of Vices and Virtues* states that:

> St Paul teaches that good women should attire themselves when they go to church… he says that they should have honest clothing and attire and not too much, for that is to say in accordance with a woman's estate. For what is too much for one woman is not too much for others. For much more behooves to

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[84] BL Sloane MS 1584, fol, 9b, 8 in French, *The Good Women of the Parish,* pp.207-08.
[85] *The Book of the Knight of the Tower*, trans. William Caxton, ed. M.Y. Offord, EETS supp. ser. 2, (Oxford: OUP, 1971), p.74.

the queen than to a burgess's wife or to a merchant's or to a squire's simple lady such as a knight's wife.[86]

This advice seems in keeping with the sumptuary laws, and the theme of appropriate clothing for church attendance was also used John Mirk's sermon for Candlemas.[87] At the start of his tale about the woman who could not attend a Candlemas service, Mirk expounds upon the opposite to the advice given by the knight. The woman gave away all her clothes as an act of charity: "so dewowt [devout] in oure Lady servyse þat heo [she] 3af [gave] for hure love all þat heo hadde save þe febullest [worst] þat heo 3ade [had] in hureself."[88] This lack of clothing, however, was also seen as a problem:

> Hyt so fel þat on a Candlemas Day heo [she] wold haue gon to chyrche, but, for heo was an honest womon, heo durst no[t for] schame, for heo hadde non honest cloþs [clothes] as heo was wonud [want] for to haue. þen [Then] when oþur men 3ode [went] to chyrche, heo was wondur sory 3at heo schulde be bout [without] masse þat holy fest.[89]

In Mirk's sermon, appearing in church in rags was seen as inappropriate as dressing above one's station. Women should dress for church honestly, not above or below their estate. The woman's excessive charitable zeal is laudatory, but it also had pitfalls bringing shame to her and her family. She had gone beyond the acceptable level of charity, exposing her family to poverty and social censure. By the end of the story, however, she had been rescued from shame by the Blessed Virgin as the

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[86] *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, ed. W. Nelson Francis, EETS 217, (Oxford: OUP, 1942), p.239-40.
[87] The feast of the Purification of Mary, 2nd February.
[88] John Mirk, *Festial*, p.58. See also, French, *Good Women of the Parish*, p.204.
[89] Mirk, *Festial*, pp.58.

motives behind her actions were pure.[90] As a reward for her actions with one everyday object, the woman had been blessed with an everyday object, the candle, which had been transformed by its contact with the Virgin into a powerful and highly valuable relic.

Drama

Clothing and other personal objects given to the church were not only used for the most formal liturgy. They were also often used for more mimetic activities, which testators sometimes remembered. Agnes Bruton, a wealthy widow from Taunton, left a red damask gown and a silk-lined mantle to be costumes in the Mary Magdalene play.[91] Evidence also suggests that the church vestments themselves, which may well have been made from personal clothing given to the church, were used as types of costumes in proto-drama. One of the earliest forms of dramatic ceremony in the medieval church was the *Visitatio Sepulchri*, which was designed for inclusion within the Easter liturgy. Contemporary rubrics upon this ceremony, such as the *Regularis Concordia* or that in the Fleury Playbook, instruct how the clergy taking on the roles of the three Marys, the angel, Jesus, Peter and John should be attired.[92] The ceremony was often performed at the end of the Mass, so costumes would be the vestments used in the Mass. The angel was often expected to wear an alb, a simple, sleeved tunic which was the most basic parts of a vestment. Another vestment for angels was the dalmatic, a form of tunic with long, wide sleeves, and

[90] French, *The Good Women of the Parish*, p.204.
[91] *Somerset Medieval Wills*, vol. 2, p.57 in French, *Good Women of the Parish*, p.44.
[92] Dunbar H. Ogden, 'Costumes and Vestments for Medieval Music Drama', in *Material Culture and Medieval Drama*, ed. Clifford Davidson, Early Drama, Art and Music Monograph Series 25, (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institue Publications, 1999), pp. 17 & 18.

surplices, which were originally white and worn over full garments. The angel in the

Visitatio of Angers in France was dressed in a "superpelicio et cappa et candida".[93]

This was probably a surplice worn underneath a white, usually richly ornamented,

which reached to the feet and closed with a clasp. One of the most resplendent

angels appeared at the sepulchre at the Abbaye Beoit in Fleury, also in France. He

wore a gilded alb, his head covered with a mitre, holding a palm in the left hand and

candelabrum full of candles in his right hand.[94]

The most frequently mentioned vestment in the rubrics for the three Maries is a

white cope. In one case, it was suggested that the clergy depicting the Maries put up

their amices over their heads, which would make them appear more like women.[95] In

almost all the rubrics the Maries were expected to carry thuribles (censers) or,

occasionally, gold or silver vases, pyxes, candles or tapers. During the fourteenth

century, the nuns at a convent in Barking (Essex) impersonated the Maries, whilst a

cleric played the angel. The nuns were dressed in surplices and veils, and carried

silver vessles.[96] Some *Visitatio* add the race of Peter and John to the tomb; this

includes a fourteenth-century text from St John the Evangelist, Dublin. The clerics

portraying these roles were to enter barefoot wearing unembroidered tunicles. John

was in white, wearing an amice and carrying a palm. Peter was in red and carrying

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[93] Jacques Eveillon, *De Processionibus Ecclesaiasticus Liber*, (Paris: P. Guillemot, 1655), p.177 in Ogden, 'Costumes and Vestments, p.22.

[94] Karl Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), 1:394 in Ogden, 'Costumes and Vestments', p.25.

[95] Amices- a rectangular piece of white linen worn around the neck and shoulders and partly under the alb. Gustave Cohen, *Histoire de la mise en scene dans la theatre religeux francais du moyen age* (Paris: Champion, 1926), pp. 36 & 39; Ogden, 'Costumes and Vestments', p.28.

[96] Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, 1, p.381 in Ogden, 'Costumes and Vestments', p.30.

his keys.[97] The Fleury play also suggests that Christ appeared like a gardener. The rubrics specified he was to wear a white dalmatic and chasuble.[98] In his right hand he held a banner and, in his left, a book decorated with gold.[99] All surviving Suffolk inventories record at least some of these vestments. Therefore, when this drama moved from religious houses to parish level, the churches were able to costume those participating in this type of drama in an appropriate manner. Certainly, other records from East Anglian parish churches suggest that church vestments were regularly used in different types of drama. In 1546, the churchwardens of St Mary, Bungay, paid 6d for 'washyng vj Abb[es] [albs] þat ware fylyd on corp[us] xpi' daye'.[100] In the same year, an entry into the Wymondham, Norfolk, churchwardens' accounts reads "to Thomas Newman for waschyng of albys field [defiled] at the p[ro]cession".[101] Although the albs of both parishes were used during the feast of Corpus Christi, it is most likely they were worn by clergy during the procession itself. However, another entry from Bungay, three years earlier, shows that the vestments were employed for the Corpus Christi *play* rather than the procession: 'It[e]m paid for sewyn[g] s[er]ten abb[es] [albs] þ[a]t war occupyd at þe game on corp[us] xpi' day'.[102] As has been demonstrated, these albs may have been, originally, donations of clothing from lay people which had great personal or financial value. They had moved from the domestic sphere into ritual use.

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[97] Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, 1, p.349 in Ogden, 'Costumes and Vestments', p.30.

[98] Dalmatic- a wide-sleeved overgarment worn over the alb.

[99] Ogden, 'Costumes and Vestments', p.31.

[100] SRO(L) 116/E1/1 p.63..

[101] Wymondham Churchwardens' Accounts, fol. 2 in *Records of Plays and Players in Norfolk and Suffolk*, *1330-1642*, ed. John Wasson, Malone Society Collections, XI (1980/81), p.130.

[102] SRO(L) 116/E1/1 p.52.

A 1552 inventory from Wymondham, Norfolk of "books, writings & other goods belonging to the town" lists several items which could have been vestments: a gown of black fustian, a gown of green satin, a coat of yellow and russet satin, a coat of crimson velvet and blue satin.[103] One entry, "one gowne of Red sattyn powd[e]r with egill[e]s" is very similar to a blue satin vestment of birds on the 1531 inventory from Huntingfield.[104] However, this inventory also records the next stage in the life of items of clothing given to the church to make vestments before the Reformation. It is not a list of church goods but of "Apparell for game players".[105] After the Reformation, many vestments and other church goods were no longer needed. The abolition of images made decorated cloths superfluous, the suppression of guilds and chantries rendered side altars with their accouterments redundant, and the hacking down of roods dispensed with rood cloths.[106] The 1552 Book of Common Prayer also stated that "ministers shall use neither Alb, Vestment, or Cope…being a Priest or Deacon, he shall have and wear a surplice only."[107] The religious upheavals of the Reformation, therefore, "dramatically altered the church's relation to its own clothes".[108] The majority of garments that came from the church were rented out or sold. In 1560, Holy Trinity, Chester, sold three vestments for 8s to Thomas Sheryton's son and Thomas Dyker's son "to make players garments."[109] The church of the Holy

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[103] Wasson, *Records of Plays and Players*, p.131.
[104] Wasson, *Records of Plays and Players,* p.131; SRO(I) FC57/A1/1, p.44.
[105] Wasson, *Records of Plays and Players*, p.131.
[106] Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour*, p.284.
[107] E. Peacock ed., *English Church Furniture, Ornaments and Decorations at the Period of the reformation: as Exhibited in a List of Goods Destroyed in Certain Lincolnshire Churches, AD 1566*, (London, 1866), pp.94 & 98 in Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour*, p.285.
[108] Peter Stallybrass, 'Worn Worlds: Clothes and Identity on the Renaissance Stage' in *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture*, ed. Margareta de Grazia, Maureen Quilligan, Peter Stallybrass, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.305.
[109] Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages, 1300-1660* (New York, 1963), II, part 1 '1576-1660', p.37 in Stallybrass, 'Worn Worlds', p.305.

Trinity, Tewkesbury, regularly rented out players' costumes to visiting actors for up to £2 19s until 1574 when the wardrobe was sold for £6 12s 4d.[110] The records of Holy Trinity, Bungay, also note a sale of old vestments: "It[e]m Rec' of Wi[llia]m Alleyns for old coppes iijs vjd".[111] However, a previous entry shows old vestments were recycled into actor's costumes: "It[e]m recevyd of Iohn Edward[es] thelder [for] all the game players gownes & coates that were made of certain pec[es] of ollde copes."[112] This entry not only shows what happened to the vestments immediately after the Reformation but also the fact that they are sold on at a later date. The vestments may not have had any further liturgical significance for the church, even as players' gear, but they could still be used to fulfill everyday financial needs.

The records of the sale of church goods of Blythburgh of 1549 records the fate of Holy Trinity's vestments: two copes of blue worsted and a suit of yellow sold for 10s; a cope and matching vestment of red damask with flowers of gold sold to Master Hopton for an undisclosed sum; two copes of red damask sold together with a suit of green baudekin for 34s 8d.[113] Understandably, some people did not agree with the sale of sacred vestments. Many churchwardens across England would have recorded entries such as that at Wangford: "there is taken out of the church one cope of velvet, one vestment of satin and in whose hands they remain, the Churchwardens

[110] Audrey Douglas and Peter Greenfield eds, *Cumberland, Westmoreland, Gloucestershire*, Records of Early English Drama (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), I, p.123 in Stallybrass, 'Worn Worlds', p.305.
[111] SRO(L) 115 /E1/1, p.103.
[112] SRO(L) 115/E1/1, p.103.
[113] The final sale was recorded in 1549. Suckling, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Suffolk*, pp.156-7.

know not."[114]   Equally a nineteenth-century antiquarian lamented: "Many private

men's Parlors were hung with Altar Cloths, their Tables and Beds covered with Copes

instead of Carpets and Coverlids… It was a sorry House and not worth the naming,

which had not somewhat of this Furniture in it, though it were only a fair large

cushion made of a Cope or Altar Cloth…"[115]   The church goods were to have a brief

reprieve under Mary's reign but, after Elizabeth became queen, many would be

returned to the secular sphere: "If vestments could be utilized for cushion coverings

and banner cloths for curtains, as cloaks had previously become chasubles and

bedspreads had provided carpets before the altars, then some of the costlier fabrics,

at least, must have lived several lives."[116]   The everyday had been transformed

something with great ritual value, but was then returned to the everyday.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the role played by everyday objects in various forms of

festive culture. It has shown that, whilst rich items of apparel were, officially, denied

to many rural Suffolk parishioners, they still ensured that these items were used

within the church. Only the best quality items was good enough for God. Other

items which were worn everyday, including jewellery which had both financial and

personal value to a donor, were gifted to saints' images either for thanks or in

supplication.   Suffolk parishioners, like parishioners across England, also had a

pragmatic attitude towards gifts of everyday household items to the church.   The

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[114] 'Certificates of Church Goods in Suffolk, *temp.* Edward VI', *East Anglian or Notes and Queries*, NS ii, p.205.

[115] J.E. Cussans ed. *Inventory of Furniture and Ornaments remaining in all the Parish Churches of Hertfordshire in the last Year of the Reign of King Edward the Sixth*, (London 1873), pp.1-2, 4-6 in Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour*, p.284.

[116] Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour*, p.285.

laity had a responsibility to provide a multitude of portable items to the church, and the re-use of household and personal items made financial sense.

This economic recycling, however, also saw a transformation in the status of the everyday object. Clothing became vestments and altar hangings, household linens cleansed sacred vessels and came into contact with the Host, accessories became objects central to the mass. Even within the private religious sphere, items originally associated with entertainment became central objects of devotion. Everyday objects were raised to items of high ritual and ceremonial significance. This transformation of status echoed the central ritual of the liturgy: the miracle of transubstantiation in which the most everyday of objects, bread, was transformed, through ritual, to become the body of Christ. Suffolk parishioners may also have been reassured as they watched familiar household or personal objects adorning saints' images or used as part of the Mass. They would most likely have hoped that the same transformation would happen to them; even the most lowly parishioner would join the saints in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Objects, like people, however, were subjected to the Wheel of Fortune. At the Reformation, many of these objects became obsolete in their role as religious items and were sold back into the domestic sphere to be returned to everyday use as cushion and bed coverings or even cleaning rags. In many cases, vestments were turned into costumes for dramatic performances. Sometimes these costumes were retained by the church but, eventually, even these wardrobes were sold to fulfill everyday financial needs. Drama itself, however, did not end with the sale of church

wardrobes.   Along with sport and other types of entertainment, it played an important part in the festive culture of both rural and civic parishes throughout the Middle Ages. This will be the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Festive Culture as Entertainment

The previous chapter discussed how the use of objects within ritual could alter their status. We saw, for example, that the status of clothing changed considerably, shifting from valuable personal items, to items used in liturgical ritual, to costumes used in drama. Drama was an important aspect of times of festivity. As has already been shown, many scholars see these occasions as moments intended to be very much apart from the everyday, working routine.[1] This chapter explicitly challenges this point of view by exploring the ways in which rural Suffolk parishioners enjoyed these times of festivity and recreation.   However, whilst the focus is on festive culture as entertainment, it will also build on chapter one, and expand on the idea that these times of celebration were not occasional events for all.

The chapter begins by discussing seasonal entertainments, showing that these would often be months in planning for reasons of economy. It will then demonstrate that times of celebration were, naturally, part of the daily working life of some people. These events provided employment not only for professional entertainers, but also for the parishioners themselves. The last part of the chapter will discuss sport, an essential relaxation for many rural Suffolk parishioners. Sport was also used to fulfill daily household needs, was compulsory by law for national needs, and could even threaten a person's everyday livelihood.

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[1] See above, Introduction.

Seasonal manorial entertainments

One of the most enduring modern images of a medieval festive occasion is that of the Lord or Lady of the manor inviting tenants and guests to enjoy a splendid feast followed by entertainments. Expectations of such, on the part of the tenants, can equally be seen in documents such as customals. This type of document laid out the customary dues attached to bondhold land, or unfree tenants, and any returns they are entitled to. A customal or 'Rentale' for the small manor of Harleston, near Stowmarket, includes entries such as:

> The same Robert owes, at Christmas, 4 hens, 2 cockerels, 2 capons and 20 eggs and shall have food[2]

An excellent example of this type of festive occasion can be found in the early fifteenth-century *Household Book of Dame Alice de Breyene.*[3] Alice de Breyene was the widow of the son of one of Edward III's Garter knights and resided at Acton Hall in the south of Suffolk. In 1412 her account book laid out the details for that year's Christmas and New Year celebrations. Christmas Day was a Sunday and present were Dame Alice, her scrivener, bailiff, harvest reeve, sixteen other members of the household, and one invited guest, Agnes Whyte. In medieval terms, this would have been an intimate household celebration. The food they enjoyed included a quarter of beef, a quarter of bacon, one young pig, a capon, and a cony, with wine and ale. Entertainment was provided by an unnamed harper. Over the following week a good number of guests arrived, including neighbouring gentry and two friars. On New Year's day the hall was packed with Dame Alice and her household, 36 guests and

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[2] SRO(I) HA 116/3/22/1: *Id[e]m Rob[ert]us d[ebet] ad Natale iiij gallin[as] ij gall[os] ij cap[onis] et xx ova et he[be]bit cibu[m].*
[3] M.K. Dale tr. and V.R. Redstone, ed. *The Household Book of Dame Alice de Breyene*, (Ipswich: Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and Natural History, 1931).

"Thomas Malcher with 300 tenants and other strangers".[4] The menu included 314 white loaves, 40 black loaves, 2 pigs, 2 swans, 2 joints of meat, 24 capons, 17 conies, wine and ale.[5]

Dame Alice's account book records the details of an important time of celebration and it is indeed tempting to read it as the 'other' to the quotidian life of everyone present. It was the reward for the daily grind on the land for her tenants, a time of relaxation for her hardworking household and estate staff, and a time of celebration and entertainment for her guests. However, in reality, the planning for this occasion would have taken weeks, perhaps months. Most likely, for Dame Alice and her servants, many of their daily tasks would have revolved around preparing for such occasions. Further afield, such festive celebrations definitely formed the livelihood of those who provided the necessary household commodities.   The *Paston Letters* reveal how far in advance Margaret Paston needed to prepare for the Christmas and New Year period, particularly if she were to get the best value for money.   In August/September her bailiff wrote with the following advice:

> Mistress, it were good to remember your stuff of herring now this fishing
>
> time. I have got me a friend in Lowestoft to help buy me seven or eight
>
> barrel, and [they] shall not cost me above 6/8 a barrel… You shall do

[4] Dale tr. and Redstone ed., *The Household Book of Dame Alice de Breyene*, p.28.

[5] Dale tr. and Redstone ed., *The Household Book of Dame Alice de Breyne*, pp.25-8; John Southworth, *The English Medieval Minstrel*, (Woodbridge, Boydell and Brewer, 1989), p.100.

[5] White loaves were made with the best flour, and probably would have been served to the gifts; black loaves were a middle-standard loaf made with whole grain flour and were probably served to the tenants. Vivian Head, *Bread and Toasties: The History of Bread and so much more*, (Leicester: Abbeydale Press, 2008), p.21.

more now [Autumn] with 40 shillings, than you shall at Christmas with 5 marks *[66s 8d]*.[6]

Previously, the bailiff had written to Sir John Paston saying that he had been unable to acquire sufficient beef for the household's requirements from the end of autumn until Lent.[7] Martinmas (11th November) was, traditionally, the last day on which animals were slaughtered in preparation for winter and, therefore, would have been the final opportunity for fresh meat and animal by-products. Due to this, it became a festive occasion in its own right.[8] The period that the Paston bailiff failed to provide for included one of the most important festive points of the year- the Christmas and New Year celebrations- and, as we have seen in Dame Alice's accounts, meat was an important requirement at this time.

In turn, the livelihood of people such as the bailiff's contact for good value herrings would be dependent on making sure that the necessary commodities were available. Many parts of Suffolk were dependent upon its agricultural and fishing industries, and the accounts of the manor of Westwood in Blythburgh, which was owned by John Hopton, record a well-run late fifteenth-century warren providing rabbits for the local area and the London market. Dame Alice's accounts show that rabbits were an essential part of the Christmas and New Year feasts. In 1465-6, the Westwood manor warren produced 1249 rabbits. Ninety-two were sent as a gift to the Prior of Blythburgh; 318 were sent to John Hopton's Yoxford household and forty

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[6] Gardiner ed.*The Paston Letters*, No. 839, in Bennett, *The Pastons and their England*, p.57.
[7] Gardiner ed. *The Paston Letters*, No.425.
[8] Roud, *The English Year*, pp.343-344. The sixteenth-century Suffolk writer, Thomas Tusser in his *Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry* (1580) offers further advice at Martinmas: "For Easter, at Martinmas, hange up a biefe."

to the Westwood household; the warrener and his assistants took 66, presumably as part of their wages; and 100 went as other gifts. The demesne farmer, Henry Brown, was given 30 rabbits in recompense for damage done by the animals in his crops. The remaining rabbits were sold for £5 17s, of which 500 were sold for £4 10s to John Harpenden, a London poulterer. The following year, the produce of the warren had increased to 1505 rabbits. Of these, John Harpenden purchased 724.[9] These accounts show John Hopton providing for his own households, ensuring that there was plenty of meat both for everyday food and for festive occasions. The valuable meat was used as a good-will gesture to smooth over any disputes with surrounding landowners arising from the location of the warren. Furthermore, John Hopton also received a good income providing to the lucrative London market which, in turn, furnished many tables at important times of festive celebration.

Of other types of meat, the swan was one of the most important centre pieces of Christmas and New Year feasts. Dame Alice ensured that two graced her table in the Acton Hall New Year festivities. John Hopton was also responsible for provision of these. During 1467, he sent a number from his swannery on the mere in Easton Bavents as gifts to the Prior of Blythburgh.[10] At this time, the mere was leased to John Northyn and John Stodham, but the swannery was clearly of importance to Hopton as it was not included within the lease. In 1464-5 35 swans were delivered to Hopton's Westwood home which, as his principal residence, would be the most likely place for him and his wife to host feasts that would require spectacular centre pieces. The swans were valued at 1s each. In 1465-6, the lease of the mere was

[9] SRO(I) HA 30/314/18 m1 and m2. See also, Richmond, *John Hopton*, pp.39-40.
[10] SRO(I) HA 30/314/18 ms2, 3, 4. See also, Richmond, *John Hopton*, p.221.

renewed, and this time it included the swannery. However, the terms of the lease still required the delivery of six swans to the Hopton households.[11] Clearly, the swan was an important commodity for him, most likely as part of a celebratory feast. The new lease holders, John Hoo and John Grymel, would have had the daily responsibility of the upkeep of the swans, which included breaking the ice on the mere when the weather was extremely cold, as well as feeding them on oats and rye when their usual, natural food sources were unavailable.

Suffolk also had a number of coastal and river ports which may have handled the import of more exotic or luxury items.[12] These items were particularly in demand at festive celebrations, especially Christmas and New Year. Dishes such as plum pottage- the forerunner of today's Christmas pudding- frumenty, and the drink, lamb's wool, were very popular at these celebrations, and required spices and sweeteners that came from abroad.[13] Margaret Paston, despite living in close proximity to Norwich, had trouble obtaining such items at a good price, and spent a great deal of time ensuring that she had ready supplies. In one letter she wrote to her son in London asking for the prices of pepper, cloves, mace, ginger, cinnamon, almonds, rice, saffron, 'raysons of Corons' and ganingal saying, "send me word what price a pound… If that it be better cheap in London than it is here, I shall send you money to buy… such stuff as I will have."[14] She also asks, frequently, for sugar

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[11] Richmond, *John Hopton*, pp.87-8.

[12] In 1477-78, John Hopton's accounts state that the income from charging the Blythburgh port for using his bushel measure was low that year because the Bretons had not come with their salt. SRO(I) HA 30/314.18 m5 in *John Hopton,* p.41 n.42.

[13] See Roud, *The English Year*, pp.387-391.

[14] Gardiner ed. *The Paston Letters*, No. 681, in Bennett, *The Pastons and their England*, p.57.

loaves, which were imported from the Holy Land via Venice, as well as dates, oranges and treacle.[15] This is further evidence that the daily tasks of women who ran households would have included substantial preparation for times of festive celebration. Equally, those living in Suffolk port parishes were part of the chain responsible for making sure that the required commodities were available and, therefore, benefitted financially from providing for the festivities of many other people throughout the country, celebrations like those given by Dame Alice de Breyene.

For Dame Alice's Christmas and New Year festivities, entertainment was provided by a harper who was present throughout the week. He may have been sent from one of nearby noble households, either that of Clare Castle, home to Sir Edward Mortimer, or Cavendish Hall, home to the Cavendish family. The harper would have changed his choice of repertoire during that time to take account of the increasing number and varying social position of the guests. New Year's Day would have been his biggest challenge as the audience comprised a complete cross-section of medieval society. It is likely that he would have performed a number of *gestes*. A *geste* was, literally, a story of achievements or adventures.[16] These dramatic narratives were associated with princes or heroes and were accompanied by music.[17] The life of the harper was largely made up of touring, providing entertainment for times of festivity. Some harpers, such as the harper present at Acton Hall, were retained by noble houses and loaned out to other households.

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[15] Gardiner ed. *The Paston Letters*, Nos. 62, 167, 563, 637, 681, 719, 812, in Bennett, *The Pastons and their England*, p.57.
[16] From the Latin 'gesta' (deed or exploit).
[17] Southworth, *The English Medieval Minstrel*, p.70.

They would have also been required to provide entertainment and musical accompaniment to the daily life of the retaining household. Records from the fourteenth century show that the harper in the royal court was expected to do far more than provide entertainment for festive occasions. In these records he was "helping to organise stage plays ('miracula') to amuse the queen, now taking his turn with the other minstrels in easing the king's long hours of pain."[18] In this context, music evidently had medicinal value, diverting the king from his illness. The harper was, therefore, an important member of the royal household.

Yet, harpers were not the only musicians who made their living by providing entertainment at particular times of festivity and in taking on further tasks during everyday life. 'Vigiles' or watchmen, performed on a variety of woodwind instruments. In the fourteenth century, as well as performing at feasts, they were required to watch over the king and his subjects during the hours of darkness, performing music on pipes or other wind instruments on the hour four times during the winter night, or three during the summer.[19] Later, musicians with such varied responsibilities as these became known as 'waits'. They guarded against thieves and other malefactors and watched out for fire.[20] Usually there were three or four in number. The chamberlains of Ipswich employed three waits in 1539, and in 1587 an order was made stating that:

> John Betts and 4 more of his company shall be musitians to this Towne, and
>
> shall go about the Towne every night, beginning about 2 of the Clock in the

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[18] B.F. and C.R. Byrely, *Records of the Wardrobe and Household 1286-1289*, (London: 1986), p.232, in Southworth, *The English Medieval Minstrel*, p.68.

[19] Southworth, *The English Medieval Minstrel,* p.74.

[20] Southworth, *The English Medieval Minstrel,* p.74.

morning, and shall be at the Bayliffs order at the other times, and for this shall have £4 with convenient liveries, besides to receive the benevolence of the inhabitants of this Towne…[21]

Waits were also employed for various tasks by many rural parishes. In Walberswick waits were hired from at least the mid-fifteenth century. The churchwardens' accounts state in 1469, "It[e]m to the Wayte for to fette ye clerk for hys labour- xvjd" and, in 1497, "It[e]m payd to the wayte a Reward- ijs".[22] Presumably, this reward was for a musical performance at a festive occasion and these two references show waits at work both at times of festivity and on daily tasks. In the sixteenth century, waits would receive an annual income of around £1, but their richest rewards came from playing at times of festivity. As many were employed also as nightwatchmen, this variety of roles meant that they needed to play a variety of instruments appropriate to different occasions. For indoor performances, viols, recorders and flutes were considered suitable. Night-time patrols would have required penetrating instruments such as the double-reeded shawm or the slide trombone.[23] However, a wait may also have owned a trumpet with a slide to vary the pitch. This would have been far more suitable for festive work such as providing music at Christmas and New Year feasts.

Dame Alice's accounts do not show any other type of entertainment beyond the harper. However, dramatic entertainments by different types of players were very common. Troupes of professional players would tour religious houses, large manor

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[21] Nathaniel Bacon, *The Annalls of Ipswiche*, 1654, ed. W.H.Richardson, (Ipswich: 1884) in Southworth, *The English Medieval Minstrel*, p.125.

[22] SRO(I) FC/185/E1/1, fols. 43 and 129.

[23] Southworth, *The English Medieval Minstrel*, p.125.

houses and noble households, earning a living by performing drama at times of festive celebration. In 1526/7 the Duke of Norfolk's household accounts of his manor in the Suffolk parish of Stoke-by-Nayland record:

> It[e]m pd on iij^{de} daye of Ienuary to iiij pleyer[es] of my lord[e] of Essex
>
> at the Comaundement of my lord[es] gr[a]ce vj^s viij^d.[24]

At this time, the performance of plays such as *Mankind* would not be unexpected. *Mankind* is a late fifteenth-century East Anglian morality play which some scholars believe was written for the abbey of Bury St Edmunds.[25] The play concerns the temptation of Mankind by four vices, Mischief, Newgyse, Nowadays and Nought, to give into the sin of sloth by abandoning his agricultural work. Mankind refuses to be swayed by Mischief's arguments for the superior attractions of bad behaviour, and the distracting behaviour of the other vices. In response, the vices conjure up a devil, Titivillus, who makes Mankind's work much more difficult and effecting the temptation.[26] Clopper has argued that this play was written for indoor performance at an inn.[27] He has also interpreted the play as suitable for an entertainment at a manor-house celebration. The beginning of the play alludes to a mixed audience who are divided by social status and, therefore, their viewing positions:

> MERCY: O ȝe soverens þat sytt and ȝe brotheren þat stonde right   uppe,
>
> (l.29)[28]

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[24] Wasson, ed. *Records of Plays and Players*, p.194.

[25] See Douglas Bruster and Eric Rasmussen, ed. *Everyman and Mankind*, Arden Early Modern Drama, (London: Methuen, 2009), pp. 8, 19-27; Gibson, *Theater of Devotion*, pp. 111-12.

[26] Pamela M. King, 'Morality Plays' in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, ed. Richard Beadle, pp.248-249.

[27] Lawrence Clopper, *Drama, Play and Game: English Festive Culture in the Medieval and Early Modern Period*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2001), p.191.

[28] All *Mankind* quotes are taken from Walker, ed. *Medieval Drama*, pp.259-279.

Walker has suggested that this is evidence for a performance in a great hall with benches for the more elite members of the audience and a standing crowd of inferior members.[29] The language and action of the play also implies that it could be enjoyed by a cross-section of society. Mankind's confessor figure is a personified Mercy who speaks in an aureate style:

> MERCY: The temptacyon of þe flesche ʒe must resist lyke a man,
>
> For þer ys ever a battell betwyx þe soul and þe body:
>
> *Vita hominis est milicia super terram*   (ll.226-228)

The vices, however, use a much simpler, earthier type of language, often employing nonsense Latin:

> MYSCHEFF: Here ys *blottybus in blottis*,
>
> *Blottorum blottibus istis*,
>
> I beschew yowr erys, a fayer hande!   (ll. 681-683)

King has described the vices' language as "degenerate nonsense consisting of parodies of [measure Latinate verse], blasphemy and scatological expletives."[30] The next chapter of this study will discuss in further detail the vices' crude language and bawdy, carnivalesque behaviour, but it is clear that *Mankind* was a play which would have appealed to all members of an audience at a festive celebration in a manor hall. As has been shown through Dame Alice's accounts, the audience could have included the gentry, the clergy, bailiffs and scribes, and manorial tenants.

It is also possible that *Mankind* was performed by small groups of amateur parishioners taking their plays to manor houses at times of festivity celebration in

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[29] Walker, *Medieval Drama*, p.260, n.2.
[30] King, *Mankind*, p.249.

order to raise money for their parish. In the same year that the Duke of Norfolk

welcomed Lord Essex's players to his Stoke-by-Nayland residence, the accounts

record:

> It[e]m pd on seynt Stephyn daye at night to iiij pleyer[es] of hadley *[Hadleigh,*
>
> *Suffolk]* by the comaundement of my lord[es] gr[a]ce   vjs viijd
>
> It[e]m pd on Seynt Ioh[a]ns daye at night to iiij pleyer[es] of lauenham
>
> *[Lavenham, Suffolk]* by my lord[es] comaundement   vjs
>
> viijd
>
> It[e]m pd the [x]vijth of Ienuary to iiij pleyer[es] of Bylleryka *[Billericay, Essex]*
>
> by my lord[es] comaundement   xls[31]

Mankind uses Latin speech but this does not mean it was unsuitable for performance

by players from rural parishes.   Evidence from a rural parish in Lincolnshire show

that parish plays often included men from a cross-section of society amongst their

actors. The 'Donington Cast List' is a one-page fragment from a document drawn up

in the Lincolnshire parish of Donington c.1563. It is a list of 20 parishioners together

with the roles that they were designated in a parish play of *Nebuchadnezzar and the*

Three Hebrew Children.   The list includes senior yeomen, wealthy tradesmen and

wardens of the church who were given the senior roles in the production; the more

junior the member of society, it appears, the smaller the role.[32]   The senior members

of a community like the town of Donington would surely have had an education at

least equal to, if not exceeding, that of Henry of Chestan in the small, rural parish of

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[31] Wasson, ed. *Records of Plays and Players*, p.194.

[32] James Stokes and Stephen K Wright, 'The Donington Cast List: Innovation and Tradition in Parish Guild Drama in Early Elizabethan Lincolnshire', *Early Theatre,* 21 (1999), pp.63-81.

Thorington. Therefore, they would clearly be up to the task of performing a play like *Mankind*.

Church Ales and Parish Drama

The first chapter, 'The organization of festive culture', discussed the ways in which Suffolk churchwardens and others used church ales as important fundraisers for the church, and the necessary organizational detail behind them, particularly if they included entertainments such as drama. As has already been shown, in some parishes they were the largest single source of parish income. This chapter, however, will focus on parish entertainments from the viewpoint of the majority of parishioners, for whom church ales were a time of fun and to socialize. Hutton describes church ales as a celebration of communal life and the summer season.[33] These events provided times of relaxation, recreation, feasting, drinking and entertainment for the parishioners and, as such, were a time of change from the parishioners' usual, everyday lives. Many church ales were held at Whitsun, with the rest usually being held sometime during the summer, although evidence from Suffolk parishes suggests that they could be held at any time of year. In 1496, the parishioners of Cratfield enjoyed four church ales: the first Sunday in Lent, Passion Sunday, Whitsun and Hallowmass.[34]

The accounts for a church ale held in Huntingfield in 1534 are worth quoting as they are a good example of the kind of menu that would have been on offer. As has already been discussed, they also show how a festive, celebratory occasion

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[33] Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England*, p.28.
[34] Holland, *Cratfield*, p.38.

organized to give parishioners a break from their usual everyday lives actually required careful planning on the part of the churchwardens. Furthermore, the Huntingfield accounts show how other people would have derived much-needed income for day-to-day living from providing in different ways for the church ale:

It[e]m payd consernyng the cherch ale

It[e]m a b[ushell] of whete and a peke   xvjd

It[e]m payd for ij caulwys *(calves)*   vs iiijd

It[e]m for spisy[es]   xijd

It[em] to the burwarde for brewing brewing *[sic.]* of the bere   iiijd

It[e]m for grynyng of the malte   ijd

It[e]m for butter   iiijs ijd

It[e]m payd to mother spinit for bultyng *[sifting wheat]*

and helping   iiijd

It[e]m a b[ushell] and a halffe of whete   xvd

It[e]m for greynyg of the whete and the malt   vjd

It[e]m for fechyng home some malt   vijd

for horse and man ij tymys goyng

It[e]m payd for howe [our] deners   jd

for hoppyes   jd

It[e]m for hony creme mylke heggyes *[eggs]*   vjd

For spyses   xd

It[e]m for wete and mutun   iiijs iijd[35]

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[35] SRO(I) FC57/A1/1, p.35.

The churchwardens would have sourced all of these food stuffs from around the parish or, in the case of the spices, perhaps in the markets at Bungay, Framlingham or Halesworth. In turn, these spices were probably imported into Suffolk coastal parishes by ship. Although the recipients of the payments are not recorded, this type of provision must have generated important income. It is clear that the wheat and malt needed processing before it could be used to brew beer, and the costs of this processing, including carriage, also had to be taken into account. Then there are the payments for the 'burwarde' [beerwarde or brewer], thus providing him with income. Furthermore, Mother Spinit is paid for her work in assisting the organization and running of the event. Her epithet suggests she may well have been amongst the more elderly of the parish and, perhaps, thankful for this extra income. In general, this time of parish festivity was obviously a costly outlay for the church and, although it gave the members of the parish community a time of change and relaxation from their everyday lives, it was also, paradoxically, an important source of employment for some. Through providing for the church ale, they gained much needed income.

Some Suffolk records do not show references to entertainments at any of the church ales. This does not mean that entertainment was not provided, simply that the churchwardens were not paying for them. They may have been paid for privately, self-funded by the entertainers gathering money from the audience directly, or no cost was involved at all. Records from other parishes, however, show that music, of course, was common, often provided by an individual piper, drummer or harper

hired for the day.[36] The churchwardens of Mildenhall, for example, paid for a tabourer at an ale.[37] There were also mock-ceremonies such as the crowning of mock-kings and mock-queens to preside over the church ales. In Wistow [Yorkshire] in the 1460s, two young people were chosen to be king and queen, and they gathered with other parishioners in a 'summerhouse', presumably a barn, on the Sunday before Midsummer Eve. The royal couple presided over musical and theatrical entertainments, which their elders considered 'appropriate and respectable'.[38] As we have already been seen, some church ales included dramatic performances.[39] In the late-fifteenth century, Robert Reynes of Acle in Norfolk made an indisputable link between church ales and the performance of plays in East Anglia:

> For an ale is here ordeyned be a comely assent
>
> for alle maner of people that apperyn here this day
>
> Unto holy churche to ben incressement
>
> Alle that excedith the costys of our play.[40]

This suggests that the charges of the players were to be paid from the profits of the ale whilst any earnings beyond this would go to the church.[41]

As has already been shown, the performance of parish plays were often recorded in Suffolk sources as "games".[42] Other East Anglian evidence supports this: a "Game

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[36] Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry* England, p.30.

[37] Middleton-Stewart ed. *Records of the Churchwardens of Mildenhall*, p.56.

[38] Roscoe E. Parker, 'Some Records of the Somyr Play', in Richard Beale Davis and John Leon Lievsay ed, *Studies in Honor of John C Hodges and Alvin Theale*, (Knoxville: 1961), pp.20-21, in Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England*, p.30. This inversion of authority is not unusual and will be discussed further in Chapter 6: Carnival and the carnivalesque.

[39] See above, Chapter 1: The organisation of festive culture.

[40] Norman Davis ed. *Non-Cycle Plays and Fragments*, EETS SS1, (Oxford: OUP, 1970).

[41] Wright, *Medieval Theatre in East Anglia*, p.317.

Place" was an outdoor performance venue in Great Yarmouth, and the scripts for the Bungay plays were kept in a 'Game Book'.[43] The East Anglian Play, *The Castle of Perseverance*, includes the line, "þus endyth oure gamys", which is a reference to the end of the play.[44] Further evidence that the word 'game' can also refer to a play can be found in the will of Benet Kyng who served as a property player for plays at Bungay, even if this will is post-Reformation.[45] King, who was also a surgeon, died in 1595.[46] His will and inventory record that he kept a chest which contained "gam players apparel", all worth £1 and, in his working chamber, he kept another box with "dysgysyngs for players" worth 7s, and "pattarnes for paynted workes".[47] These patterns were paper designs or templates, perhaps in book form, which were followed in the making of costumes, props or scenery. This wide range of items suggests that Bennett Kynge was more than just an actor, and should be thought of as a local theatrical producer or property man. There are references to Kynge in the Churchwardens' Accounts of Holy Trinity, Bungay: in 1568, Kynge received 6s "for his paynes serving the game".[48] Kynge was paid more than anyone else directly involved with the production. This is also good evidence for someone making part of his living through providing for times of festivity.

Wright has shown that the word "play" can also be interchangeable with the word 'may' in Suffolk records.[49] Three entries in the Walberswick churchwardens'

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[42] See above, Chapter 1: The organization of festive culture.

[43] Wasson, *Records of Plays and Players*, p.12; SRO(L) 116/E1/1, p.18.

[44] Line 3645, Mark Eccles ed. *The Macro Plays*, EETS 262, (Oxford: OUP, 1969), p.111.

[45] See above, Chapter 1: The organization of festive culture.

[46] Dymond, 'Three Entertainers from Tudor Suffolk', pp.2-5.

[47] Dymond, 'Three Entertainers from Tudor Suffolk', p.5.

[48] SRO(L) 115/E1/1/, p.48.

[49] Wright, *Medieval Theatre in East Anglia*, p.319.

accounts state: "It[e]m payd for bred and drynk gwen *[when]* blybur *[Blythburgh]* may was here", "It[e]m payd qhen *[when]* blybur may was here", "It[e]m payd to kateryn brown gwen blybur may was here."[50] Another 1497 entry in the Walberswick accounts reads, "Itm payd gwhen brownfeld game was schowed here", a reference to the Walberswick parishioners watching a play staged by the inhabitants of a neighbouring parish.[51] Stokes who has studied both Walberswick and Blythburgh records, has found that the Blythburgh May visits to Walberswick had their own bann criers.[52] As has been discussed through the *Croxton Play of the Sacrament*, bann criers were associated with the publicity of plays.[53] Stokes' ongoing study of drama in Suffolk is showing, quite clearly, that plays put on by small groups of amateur players and taken around a small network of parishes, was very common indeed.[54] If all references of this nature to other parishes in the Walberswick churchwardens' accounts are put together, it is possible to draw up a play playing network for this parish as well (see Figure 7). This is another example of inter-parochial networks at times of festivity.[55]

The text of *Mankind* contains further evidence for playing networks in rural areas of East Anglia. When Titivillus sends Newgyse, Nowadays and Nought to maraud and plunder the local countryside, they refer to ten individuals living in ten parishes, six near Cambridge and four near King's Lynn in Norfolk (ll. 506-518). Bruster and Rasmussen have interpreted these references as names of those who

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[50] SRO(I), FC 185/E1/1, fols. 66 & 74.
[51] SOR(I), FC 185/E1/1, fol. 73.
[52] Stokes, 'Early English Drama in Suffolk'.
[53] For more on this see above, Chapter 4: Use of Objects in Festive Culture.
[54] Stokes, 'Early English Drama in Suffolk'.
[55] For more on this see above, Chapter 1: The organisation of festive culture.

Figure 7: Walberswick and Huntingfield Playing Networks

had given money towards the cost of the play.[56] It was a form of subscription.

Including the subscribers' names within in the play "could have been a way to

acknowledge their financial sponsorship as well as their social status."[57] In this way,

these men are recorded in a manner similar to the parishioners who gave gifts for

the repairs of Brundish church and were entered on to the bede roll.[58] It is also

possible that these names were substituted for other names if the play was

performed elsewhere. This type of substitution can be seen in the only surviving

cycle of East Anglian plays, the *N-Town* cycle "*N*" stands for *nomine* or name as in

'name to be supplied', making the cycle adaptable for many performance venues.

The *Mankind* parish networks, however, are reminiscent of the Walberswick playing

network, and parish plays were either put on by parishioners themselves or funded

by the profits of a church ale. The King's Lynn parishes are no more than ten and a

half miles from each other, placing them within walking distance for parishioners.[59]

It has been suggested that pre-Reformation parishioners would have walked for up

to two hours to see a play.[60] This means the King's Lynn parishes are an ideal parish

playing network.

Looking to documents which are not churchwardens' accounts, the records of some

rural Suffolk parishes show further evidence for dramatic activity. The records of

Wenhaston, Bramfield, Cratfield, Brampton, Peasenhall, Wrentham, Holton and

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[56] Bruster and Rasmussen ed., *Everyman and Mankind*, p.27.
[57] Bruster and Rasmussen ed., *Everyman and Mankind*, p.27.
[58] See above, Chapter 2: Churchwardens' Accounts.
[59] Bruster and Rasmussen ed., *Everyman and Mankind*, p.27.
[60] Kenneth M. Dodd, 'Another Elizabethan Theatre in the Round', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 21 (1970), p.129.

Rumburgh all include references for sites dedicated to "campyng" or "camp-ball".[61]

Much of this evidence, however, comes from nineteenth-century tithe maps. Three apportionments in Bramfield are named "Camping Field", "Little Camping Field" and "Great Camping Field".[62] However, there is related evidence in pre-Reformation records. In 1525/6, Sir Arthur Hopton, then Lord of the Manor of Blythburgh ordered a survey of the Blythburgh manors of Westwood and Hinton. A single line entry in the survey reads:

> The same [Gregory Cawse] holds 1 large piece of land, bondhold, called "campynghyll"[63]

On its own, this appears to reveal nothing about festive culture, and certainly seems to have no link with dramatic activity within Blythburgh. When read in conjunction with other sources, however, it is a different matter. The most interesting thing about this entry is that the piece of land has been named "campynghyll". In Suffolk it appears this prefix of "camping" or "camping" is not at all unusual. Dymond has taken a particular interest in this and his work can help shed light upon the entry in the Blythburgh survey.[64] The prefix 'camping' in this instance has nothing to do with our modern use of it. Instead, it probably derived from the Anglo-Saxon "campian" meaning 'to fight', and the later, Middle English "campen" meaning "to fight, contend or strive". It was, usually, given as a name to a ball-game "which certainly

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[61] See David Dymond, 'Camping Closes' in Dymond and Martin, ed. *An Historical Atlas of Suffolk*,), p.154 See also SROI FDA302/A1/1a; FDA135/A1/1a; FDA208/A1/1a.

[62] SROI FDA31/A1/1a.

[63] SRO(I) HA30:50/22/27.6(4)   *Idem ten[e]t i magn[am] pec[iam] t[e]r[re] nat[ive] voc[atam] campynghyll cont[inentem] p[er] estima[cionem]*.

[64] David Dymond, 'A Lost Social Institution: The Camping Close', *Rural History*, 1 (1990), pp.165-192. As this reference to camping was previously unknown to him, Dymond has verified that my reading of the survey at this point is correct, and that this piece of land is called a 'campynghyll'.

contained its share of fighting or wrestling".[65] Camp-ball, which originated in Anglo-Saxon times, is best described as a blend of football, handball, and rugby and was played for centuries in the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Essex. The competing teams would line their players up opposite each other and a ball about the same size as today's cricket ball and made of thong and leather was thrown up between them. Whichever team caught it rushed for the opposing goal and "the camp was on". There were two goals on each side, up to 200 yards apart, and points were awarded for scoring goals and for trapping opponents in possession of the ball.[66]

The best examples of evidence of camp-ball can be found in fieldnames, and a considerable number of East Anglian parishes had a piece of land with such a name. This land was normally known as a 'Camping Close', but there are also a large number of variants including Camping Land, Meadow, Ground, Place, Field, Yard or Pightle. The size of these fields changed over time, from less than four acres down to only half an acre. They were almost any shape, usually located on level ground but sometimes occurring on a slope or valley bottom. Within a parish, a camping close was normally found in one of two positions, very close to the church and churchyard, often immediately adjacent, or associated with the village nucleus and lying behind a row of houses or at one end of a street. Many of these playing fields

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[65] Dymond, 'A Lost Social Institution', p.165. At this point, Dymond states "One must acknowledge the possibility of confusing this term with other place-names, for example those based on the Latin *campus* and OE *camp* meaning simply a field or enclosure". For the purposes of this essay, I am going to follow Dymond's argument that the name of a portion of land has been given the prefix through its connection with the game of 'camping'.

[66] The game of camp-ball will be discussed in further detail below, and Chapter 6: Carnival and the carnivalesque.

were private property and were, occasionally, let or lent for recreational use. Other sites were bequeathed or given by individuals to the parish for inhabitants to use in perpetuity.[67] Dymond notes that many camping closes lay near the church, and that this cannot be accidental. It appears that the site was used not only for camping but also for other kinds of recreation which demanded the close be near the church. He states that this could be especially advantageous in arranging pageants, processions and dramas such as *The Croxton Play of the Sacrament*, where the play turns into a singing procession and appears to end inside a church.[68]

One of the best examples of a link between the Camping close and drama comes from the Suffolk parish of Walsham-le-Willows. An entry in a 1509 manor rental reads:

The town there holds by new rent one parcel of land called campyngclose,

part of the tenement of Thomas Berne, by year- 7½ d…[69]

A later survey of Walsham-le-Willows, made in 1581, has an entry for the same tenement, which gives us more detail:

The said inhabitants of the Village of Walsham hold by custom one piece of

pasture called le game place, at one time Thomas Berne's, with a part of one

piece of pasture at the west end of the same…[70]

This survey is based on a slightly earlier survey of Walsham, known as the "Field Book" and drawn up in 1577. The entry in the Field Book for the same tenement

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[67] Dymond, 'A Lost Social Institution', p.167.
[68] Dymond, 'A Lost Social Institution', p.166.
[69] Dodd, 'Another Elizabethan Theatre in the Round', p.129.
[70] Dodd, 'Another Elizabethan Theatre', p.125. For the full surveys, see Kenneth Dodd, *The Fieldbook of Walsham-le-Willows 1587*, SRS, Vol.17 (1984), (Ipswich: Boydell, 1984).

shows an indisputable link between the Camping close and dramatic performance. It reads:

> Walsham Towne- The said game place in the tenure of many men for the use of the aforementioned Walsham town.
>
> Le Game Place- is held on the customary ground of the said manor of Walsham and a place surrounded by a bank of good height and set with many trees called poplars which grow on the same bank, in the middle a round place of earth with a stone wall about the same height as the earth made for the use of Stage Plays…[71]

This is evidence linking the game of camp-ball, and the camping close (or 'hyll') where the game was played, with drama. Through the use of the landscape, here two distinct kinds of festive culture overlap.

Sport

Evidently, camping closes were used for different types of recreational activity. Terminology used in parish documents at this time to describe such activity can be confusing. An excellent example of this is from the parish of Great Dunmow in Essex. The surviving receipts for the parish's Corpus Christi play read:

> Receved at our playe fyrste the games of the bysshope of Seynthe Andrewe and for the shotyng…
>
> Re for the games of our runyng
>
> Re… at the games of our leaping…[72]

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[71] Dodd, 'Another Elizabethan Theatre', p.126.
[72] Clopper, *Drama, Play and Game*, p.12.

Here, it is clear that the Great Dunmow Corpus Christi play was not a re-enanctment of the saint's life and miracles, but a series of competitive sports.[73] It is well known, however, that the church was not keen on parish sports or entertainments, particularly those that took place in the churchyard, and many priests and bishops spoke out against them. However, like many other types of complaint literature through the centuries, these criticisms are good sources of evidence for the very type of activity they are trying to suppress. In 1400, a priest charged his parishioners whether they were in the church or the churchyard to make, "ne dauncys, ne werdley songs, no interlodyes, ne castynges of the stone, steraclys, ne playing at the balle, ne other ydell iapys and pleyis."[74] Evidence from a Suffolk parish, however, seems to suggest that the church occasionally, at least, encouraged competitive sports, especially the popular game of camp-ball. Along with the provision by most parishes of a site in which regular matches took place, a 1534 reference from the Cratfield Parish accounts reads: "and to Wyll[iam] But for a ball to camp wyth iiijd"[75]

Clerics may have had good reason to speak out against camp-ball. Despite seemingly promoted by Suffolk parishes and churches, camp-ball was, in the strictest sense, an illegal game and had been banned as early as 1314 in the City of London.[76] By the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, when post-Reformation sensibilities had become entrenched, players of camp-ball were specifically indicted by local

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[73] Clopper, *Drama, Play and Game*, p.12.
[74] Clopper, *Drama, Play and Game*, p.17.
[75] Holland, *Cratfield*, p.49.
[76] F.P. Magoun, 'Football in Medieval England', *American Historical View*, 35 (1929-30), pp.36-7, in Dymond, 'A Lost Social Institution', p.171.

magistrates and ecclesiastical courts often due to injuries sustained by the violence of the game itself and the competitiveness of both the players and spectators. This was, in fact, nothing new. In 1321, a canon of Shouldham Priory, Norfolk "while competing for the ball, accidentally killed a friend who impaled himself on his knife".[77] In 1531, Sir Thomas Elyot thought the game "nothinge but beastly furie and exstreme violence",[78] and this is backed up by other evidence. In 1582, a goalkeeper at a game in Gosfield, Essex collided with another player and died later the same day.[79] Despite its high levels of violence and risk, this sport was enjoyed by many people at times of festivity and celebration. The appearance of it in the proceedings of manorial courts is another example of aspects of festive culture being part of parishioners everyday lives. Rivalry between parish teams, like church ales and plays, would have been another time of inter-parochial interaction. It is easy to imagine how camp-ball rivalries and enmities could easily affect parishioners' everyday working and social relationships.

Camp-ball, however, was not the only sport that Suffolk parishes and churches provided for. Archery, also, is referenced many times in parish documents. The parish of Cratfield, for example, paid in 1538/39:

> to Master Everard of Linstead Magna for a bow and arrows   3s 8d[80]

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[77] Magoun, p.37 in Dymond, 'A Lost Social Institution', p.181.

[78] Sir Thomas Elyot, *The Book Named the Governour*, (London: 1531), f.99, in Dymond, "A Lost Social Institution", p.181.

[79] *Calendar of Assize Records- Essex Indictments, Eliz I*, (London: 1978), p.227, quoted in Dymond, 'A Lost Social Institution', p181. The link between camp-ball and social unrest will be discussed further below, Chapter 6: Carnival and the carnivalesque.

[80] Holland, *Cratfield*, p.55. A word of caution must be given for any reference to the purchase of bows and arrows in pre-Reformation parish documents. At the time of Edward II, an order was given that every parish should provide a foot soldier, ready armed and equipped for 60 days a year. This was followed by an order of 1449 that every 30 men should furnish a horse and keep a certain amount of

Archery has often been described as the medieval national sport and attitudes towards it at the time are excellent examples of how elements of festive culture and everyday life overlapped. Dennis Brailsford has shown how, in the fourteenth century, the battles of Bannockbourn and Crecy were "highly pertinent events in the history of sport." The English lost the former, but not until the archers had done much damage at long range and "the success of the longbow was confirmed at the latter."[81] The effectiveness of the longbow as a weapon of war caused new interest within the government to the way in which people spent their leisure time. In 1363 the following proclamation was made by Edward III:

> Whereas the people of our realm, rich and poor alike, were accustomed formerly in their games to practice archery- whence by God's help, it is known that high honour and profit came to our realm, and no small advantage to ourselves in warlike enterprises… that every man in the same country, if he be able bodied, shall, upon holidays, make use, in his games, of bows and arrows…and so learn and practice archery.[82]

The difficulty of using a powerful weapon meant that training needed to begin at an early age. In 1466 a further order was made that every Englishman and Irishman dwelling in England should have a longbow of his own height. The order goes on to direct that Butts should be made in every parish, and the inhabitants were to shoot up and down on all feast days. Suffolk parishes responded in the same way as all

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armour ready for practical service in the field both at home and abroad. (Cox, *Churchwardens' Accounts* p.325) The parish of Cratfield was no exception. Before its suppression, the parish gild had taken on the responsibility for supplying soldiers. This was then taken on by the churchwardens. See Holland, *Cratfield*, pp. 55 (1538/39) and p.71 (1546).

[81] Dennis Brailsford, *British Sport: A Social History*, (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1997) p.15.

[82] A.M. Myers ed. *English Historical Documents*, vol. 4, *1327-1485*, (London: Eyre and Spottiswood, 1969), p.1182.

other parishes in the country, as is evidenced in their accounts. The Walberswick

churchwardens' accounts read:

(1480) It payd for ye butts makyng   iiijs

(1492) Itm payd ffor ye making of ye bottys   iiijs[83]

The Cratfield accounts give more detail about the butts showing how many men

were employed in building and repairing them, and how long it took:

(1538/39)

The cost of ye Butts

Itm to Edmund Myllys for v dayes worke and for hys borde

ijs vjd

Itm Thomas Smythes man for v dayes work and hys borde

js jd

Itm John Smythes man for v dayes work and hys borde

vd

Itm ye bryngyng downe of the tymber and for Thomas Smythes boyes worke

viijd[84]

Evidence for butts can also be found in place names within Blything Hundred

parishes. The nineteenth-century tithe apportionments for Halesworth, Rumburgh

and Westhall all include field names which refer to butts.[85] However, this evidence

must always be treated with caution as it might refer to the abuttals of the field

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[83] Raven, *Walberswick*, pp.47, 65.
[84] Holland, *Cratfield*, p.15.
[85] SRO(I) FDA 117/A1/1a; FDA 208/A1/1a; FDA 278/A1/1a.

upon roads or parish boundaries. Westhall, for example, has a second apportionment entitled "Butts Road Piece".[86]

This enforced practice of archery, however, was never as popular as more informal competitions. These took place using rose garlands, artificial parrots, dead or wooden cocks, or circles of coloured cloths as targets. "Shooting a prick" used a wooden peg which was stuck upright in the ground or fixed in the centre of a white, straw-stuffed, canvas disk, which was about 18' in diameter. Unsurprisingly, informal archery matches were prime reasons for betting. The household accounts of John Howard, Duke of Norfolk, in the 1460s showed many entries such as, "paid to Thomas York, for losses at the pricks, 8d; losses at the butts 8d; to Richard Crowthe at the butts, 12d; for bread and ale for all, 4d."[87] The Duke clearly had no luck in his archery matches, or his tenants, thanks to their enforced practice on Sundays and feast days, were much better shots! But this did not stop him from regularly enjoying the sport and making bets upon it. Another informal archery practice was known as 'practising by roving' which involved shooting at random targets over any distance. Gangs of people went roving on feast days, such as the sons of John Hopton and their friends. In 1463-4 he paid for them to spend a few days holiday away from their school at Easton Bavents and to go to his manor at Wissett with their tutor.[88] Here they were shooting for deer, thus combining an enjoyable holiday pastime with the necessary duty of providing fresh meat for the table. Authorities, however, were well aware that, beyond more informal methods

[86] SRO(I) FDA 278/A1/1a.
[87] Teresa McClean, *The English at Play in the Middle Ages*, (Windsor: Kensal Press, 1983), p.15.
[88] Richmond, *John Hopton*, p.133.

of practice, many other distractions were available to men in their leisure time when they should taking part in archery. The 1363 proclamation describes other recreational pastimes: "and now the art [archery] is almost totally neglected, and the people amuse themselves with throwing stones, wood, or iron, or playing handball, football, or 'stick-ball' or hockey or cock-fighting; and some indulge in other dishonest games."[89] There is a tension here between the type of sport the authorities deemed necessary for national defence and the type of sport the people actually chose for their recreational time. In 1544, Henry VIII recognized that other types of entertainment were keeping men from their archery practice as ""sundry interludes and common plays" performed in dark, suspicious places…lead the youth astray."[90] Again, there is tension between the way in which authorities believed people should spend their leisure time, and the way in which people themselves wished to spend that time. These tensions both emerged from festive culture and shaped the forms it took, and will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed activities that Suffolk parishioners enjoyed at times of festive celebration and when they were not working. These activities have been seen as the "other" to people's everyday lives, a way in which parishioners could relax and enjoy themselves away from the hard work of normal, daily tasks. In rural, agricultural parishes such as those of Suffolk, quotidian tasks would certainly have

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[89] Myers, *English Historical Documents*, p.1182 in Matthew Woodcock, 'Shooting for England: Configuring the Book and the Bow in Roger Ascham's *Toxophilus*', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, XLI/4 (2010), pp.1028.
[90] Hughes, Paul L. and James F. Larkin ed. *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, vol. 1, *The Early Tudors (1485-1553)*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964, p.341 in Woodcock, 'Shooting for England', p.1030.

been demanding, both physically and mentally. Evidence in Suffolk records for entertainment has shown that parishioners certainly did know how to enjoy themselves on celebratory occasions. They enjoyed communal feasts with extensive menus followed by a variety of entertainments including music and drama, and partook in a variety of sports as a release from the everyday. However, for many, these occasions were, in fact, integral to their everyday lives. For some professional entertainers these extraordinary times of celebration were the basis of their incomes. Estate owners, farmers and some who worked in coastal parishes made part of their living providing for or importing luxury items which would raise everyday fare to something celebratory, unusual and exciting. For women, especially, preparing for these events was an ongoing task throughout the year. They were a drain on both a householder's time and household finance. Therefore, it was important to budget and organise well in advance. Even the high-point of the entertainment at a festive occasion, such as a play, could be an important consideration in parishioners' daily lives. Records show that East Anglian plays were spectacular affairs which would have been months in planning and rehearsal.

A more regular release from the everyday toil of work was sport. The violence of popular games such as camp-ball suggests that men would use them as an opportunity to release tension which built up during their normal activities. However this, in turn, could lead to further tensions. Rivalries arising, necessarily, from a sport which had two opposing teams could have a negative impact upon people's everyday lives and social relationships. The violence, also, could have an impact on working lives as injuries would prevent someone from doing their usual

employment, especially in a pre-industrial, rural society. In many cases, this could be permanent. Tensions that arose in sport were not just on a parochial level. Medieval statutes and proclamations show that there was tension between authorities, both religious and secular, and ordinary people when it came to the way in which one should spend one's recreational time. These tensions were brought about by opposing views of festive culture and its various forms of expression. However, aspects of festive culture were also used by ordinary people to vent their anxieties about their everyday lives, including grievances with authority. This will be the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 6: Carnival and the Carnivalesque

The previous chapter discussed elements of festive culture which would bring people together. Although it was argued that, often, forms of celebration, entertainment and recreation were important parts of people's everyday lives, this does not necessarily preclude the fact that they were also the 'stand out' moments, giving most a relief from their usual round of daily work. They would bring a community together no matter how wide the social spectrum. However, certain types of behaviour and appearance at such times seem to suggest a different outcome. Some festivals were a time when the masses took on an otherwise inaccessible voice,[1] and these behaviours and appearances can often be seen as dividing a community. This chapter will discuss the evidence for particular types of behaviour during moments of festivity in rural Suffolk, and will consider the impact that this behaviour might have had on local communities.

The chapter begins with an overview of European carnival, before going on to identify an allegorical carnivalesque language present in East Anglian art, drama and literature of the time, discussing how this was manifest in rural Suffolk parishes. At some festivities, such as the ceremony of the Boy Bishop, it was used in a controlled way and, indeed, as a societal "safety-valve". It will then be demonstrated that parishioners of rural Suffolk were also able to se this language to articulate concerns for their everyday livelihoods, be it unfair taxation or threats to their very way of life. The chapter will then explore the ways in which a relationship between the

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[1] Twycross, 'Some Approaches to Dramatic Festivity', in *Festive Drama*, Twycross, p.18.

carnivalesque and the everyday was incorporated into East Anglian drama. It will finish with a discussion about the relationship between sport and the carnivalesque and how, once again, rural Suffolk parishioners used this relationship to express their opinions and fears for their everyday lives.

European Carnival

One expression of festive culture which has long associations with issues of power and social upheaval is carnival. The word "carnival" derives from the Latin *carnem levare* or Italian "carne levare" meaning the "putting away or removal of flesh".[2] It was interpreted as abstention from both meat and sexual intercourse which was required for the forty days of Lent. The term "carnival", therefore, became applied to a final fling before a period of self-denial. Its first use in the English language was not until the mid-sixteenth century when it was used to describe continental festivities. In 1549, William Thomas wrote in *The Historie of Italie* of "Carnouale time (which we call shroftide)", whilst, in 1567, Bishop John Jewel wrote, "The Italians contrary to the Portuiese [Portugese], call the first week in Lent the Carneuale."[3] In mainland Europe, carnival was the occasion for public gatherings, the display of elaborate images and excessive behaviour. This display and behaviour provided a ritual vocabulary for the festival which could be used to demonstrate belief and opinions. Edward Muir, amongst many others, has argued that carnival vocabulary derived from the lower body and its processes.[4] Because of this, much carnival

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[2] *OED*, s.v. carnival.
[3] J. Jewel, *Replie Harding Answeare*, (1567), quoted in *OED*, s.v. carnival.
[4] Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, Chapter 2: Carnival and the Lower Body.

imagery also used symbolism from the underworld and lower body turning, literally, the world upside down.

Imagery involving both sexual intercourse and meat was very common in European carnival. The prominent long nose common on many masks worn during carnival was understood to represent the phallus. In Germany, unmarried girls and spinsters had to pull a plough through the streets while men cracked whips about their heads and, in many Italian cities, men cross dressed as women and held mock weddings.[5] In 1583, the butchers of Koenigsberg, Germany, carried a 440lb sausage in procession, and the butchers' guild played a central role in organizing festivities.[6] In Venice, the seasonal chore of butchering pigs to make sausages became an elaborate allegory of justice and domination. The centrepiece of carnival ritual was the slaughter of twelve pigs and a bull in a square next to the Palace of the Doges. The animals received a formal judicial sentencing procedure as they were herded into a courtroom and sentenced to death. They were then taken into a pen in the usual place of execution where the executioners, who were actually blacksmiths, had to chase and capture them before they were beheaded.[7]

Such imagery was also widespread in medieval art, literature and drama. The battle between carnival and Lent, represented so well in Pieter Breughel's 1559 painting, portrayed the idea of a world in which the normal rules of social order and Christian pieties were mocked and disputed. Related imagery and behaviour included

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[5] Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, p.97.
[6] Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, p. 97.
[7] Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, p.95.

peasants imitating kings, servants ordering masters, boys beating fathers, and women beating men. German carnival behaviour gave the opportunity for satirical attacks on Catholics when, early in the Protestant Reformation, a group of citizens and students held a mock hunt of monks and nuns, driving them through the streets and into nets.[8] Carnival, therefore, was attractive as it gave a voice to subordinate groups. Bakhtin observed that carnival was able to open up an underworld of festive laughter and market-place language. This underworld had three characteristics: ambivalence, a tendency to combine praise and abuse; duality of the body, a distinction between the material body and the ascetic stratum of reason and piety; and incompleteness, the idea that nature is never finished and requires, perpetually, the old to die in order to make way for the participation of youth in festivities.[9] The first characteristic can be represented by a fat glutton created King of Carnival, such as in Breughel's painting, whilst the third characteristic explains the negative depictions of the old and authoritarian in carnival behaviour.

Such themes and imagery unified carnival festivity, but the general division of society into groups to express this collective spirit implied, immediately, social conflict. This conflict was represented by the opposition between two folk, religious, chronological or seasonal entities including carnival against Lent, pork versus cod, and summer versus winter. Eventually, symbolic struggles came to represent social realities. Food was a common metaphor. The rich and their consumption of food were symbolized by game, poultry, fine wines, spices and sugar. The poor were represented by sour, salty, rotten and stinking food. This representation was

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[8] Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, pp.97-98.
[9] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, p.370.

brought about because opinions on social welfare were diverse. An indirect tax on meat or bread, for example, could be considered a social ill for a craftsman, whilst the authorities might consider the same tax as beneficial.[10] Some scholars, however, have seen carnival as useful, socially, as it could "maintain local society in working order".[11] The Spanish folklorist, Julio Caro Baroja, stated that this was achieved in several ways, including the elimination of harmful biological, social and sinful elements; re-enacting the normal course of human life: copulation, birth, death and rebirth; and participation in noisy activities which helped in the elimination of harmful elements.[12] Others have agreed with Baroja, viewing carnival as a safety valve for tensions that build up in any hierarchical society. Max Gluckman has described 'rituals of rebellion' which allow subjects to express resentment of authority but which do not actually change anything.[13] Carnival behaviour is, essentially, liminal, and its apparently absurd, paradoxical, extravagant and illicit characteristics have been interpreted as providing much needed emotional release.[14]

Shrovetide and the carnivalesque

As William Thomas' quote has shown, the period known as carnival in southern Europe was Shrovetide in Britain. Behaviour on Shrove Tuesday, immediately before the start of Lent, had little to do with the original, pious purpose of shriving or confession in preparation for the austerities of Lent. Like continental behaviour, it

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[10] Ladurie, *Carnival in Romans: A People's Uprising at Romans, 1579-1580*, p.317.

[11] Ladurie, *Carnival*, p.312.

[12] Ladurie, *Carnival*, p.312.

[13] Max Gluckman, *Politics, Law and Ritual in Tribal Society*, (Oxford: OUP, 1965) in Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, p.98.

[14] Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, (Chicago: Aldine, 1969), in Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, p.98.

could be riotous and in defiance of authority. In twelfth-century London, boys staged cock-fights or threw cocks at each other, and the custom of 'barring out' the schoolmaster is thought to have taken place at least as early as the fifteenth century.[15] London apprentices were notorious for their riotous behaviour at Shrovetide and they would often harass presumed prostitutes and attack brothels.[16] The climate for carnival in southern Europe, however, was much warmer than that of Britain. Festivals in Britain at other times of the year, therefore, took on carnivalesque characteristics. These characteristics, like those found in the European festival, constituted a ritual language which served a variety of festive purposes, such as allowing access to forms of taboo-breaking, creating liminal moments when new or alternative ideas could be asserted, and providing a model for social creativity, satire, reform or even rebellion. The relationship between this type of behaviour and the festive culture of rural Suffolk will now be discussed.

One type of carnivalesque behaviour for which there is evidence within Suffolk is the "Boy Bishop" ceremony. This grew out of a custom settled in the church in Germany by the early tenth century in which junior clergy and assistants of a cathedral were honoured and allowed to hold processions on successive holy days after Christmas. By the twelfth century, the Boy Bishop ceremony had become linked with the cult of St Nicholas of Myra, the patron saint of children. It became the practice for a cathedral choirboy to be chosen, either on the feast of St Nicholas (6th December) or on the feast of the Holy Innocents (28th Dec), to impersonate the bishop and lead a

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[15] Richard Axton, 'Festive Culture in Country and Town' in *The Cambridge Cultural History of Britain*, vol. 2: *Medieval Britain*, ed. Boris Ford, (Cambridge: CUP, 1992), p.146.

[16] Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, p.18.

procession before presiding over other parts of the religious service.[17] The boy

bishop was often associated with the European "Feast of Fools" which was organized

by the young clergy who mocked the behaviour and speech of priests during the

celebration of the mass. Led by the elected "Bishop of Fools", the boys put on

vestments backwards, held missals upside down, danced and drank in church,

masqueraded (even as women), sang obscene songs, brought donkeys into church

and insulted the congregation.[18] By 1500, the Boy Bishop ceremony was observed in

some major British abbeys, including Bury St Edmunds, and had spread to parish

churches.[19]

The boy bishops of England wore a bishop's robes and ring, and carried a mitre. The

boy bishop of Boxford wore a red coat: "Re. of rychard clark for a motheter cot of

red of saynt necolas xiijd".[20] In 1465/66, John Cowper of Boxford bequeathed "to

Boxford church, for the feasts of St Nicholas, a mitre with a decent and convenient

crozier."[21] A description of the duties of a boy bishop survives from Salisbury

Cathedral. The "bishop" was elected by choirboys from amongst their numbers, and

first appeared in public after vespers upon 27th December, the day before the Feast

of the Holy Innocents. He led choristers in procession to the high altar dressed in silk

copes like the higher clergy, carrying candles and singing. The genuine bishop and

chapter followed bearing books and candles as the boys normally would, and gave

up their stalls to the choristers. The boy bishop would then preside over all services

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[17] Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, p.100.
[18] Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, p.102.
[19] Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England*, pp.11-12.
[20] Northeast, ed. *Boxford Churchwardens Accounts*, p.38.
[21] Northeast and Falvey eds., *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury*, p.147 (247).

until the end of the feast of the Holy Innocents, except the Mass.[22] The Christian justification for this was the prophecy in the Old Testament book of Isaiah that, "a little child will lead them" (Isaiah 11:6), and the world-upside-down imagery of texts such as the 'Magnificat': "He hath put down the mighty from their seat: and hath exalted the humble and meek. / He hath filled the hungry with good things: and the rich he hath sent away empty" (Luke 1: 52-3).

There is also evidence from Suffolk of another aspect to the boy bishop ceremonies. In 1754, Gardiner recorded the discovery in Dunwich of coin-like tokens, cast in lead alloy and bearing legends referring to St Nicholas. They closely resemble groats and pennies, and are believed to have originated from Bury St Edmunds, where a surviving mould for this type of pieces still survives.[23] One of the common duties of the boy bishop was to process through the parish collecting money for the church. The boy bishop of York Minster perambulated Yorkshire for a fortnight, covering a sixty-mile circuit. He visited and sang at religious, noble and gentry houses and collected money. The boy was allowed to keep whatever was left after the deduction of expenses of a large supper on the nights of St John or the feast of the Holy Innocents.[24] The boy bishop was also known to give out alms.   It is hard to believe that the bishop distributed these tokens as alms if they were mere toy money without value. Rigold interprets these tokens as similar to the immediately redeemable tokens familiar in religious institutions for alms or payments that had to be made in church. In the Bury St Edmunds context it is likely that they were

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[22] Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England*, p.11.
[23] See S.E. Rigold, 'The St Nicholas or Boy Bishop Tokens', *PSIAH*, 34 (1978), pp. 87-101.
[24] Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, p.100.

redeemable for sweetmeats or the like from the 'Dousse' Guild, which was responsible for organizing the Boy Bishop ceremony, or from the abbey almonry.[25] There are two interpretations for the presence of the tokens in Dunwich. Firstly, they may have been brought back to Dunwich by a pilgrim or visitor to Bury St Edmunds and the shrine of St Edmund.[26] Secondly, they may have been purchased by the churchwardens of one of the parish churches in Dunwich from the workshop in Bury St Edmunds to be used in their own Dunwich ceremonies. If the second interpretation is correct, it is possible that the tokens were redeemable with Dunwich tradespeople. The tradespeople would then be remunerated by the church or would donate their wares in a charitable gesture, or for the benefit of their souls. This would then be another example of people's everyday lives and livelihoods interacting with aspects of festive culture.

Disguisings

The Boy Bishop ceremony can be seen as a type of disguising. Disguising, which has obvious connections with carnivalesque behaviour, was very popular in the late middle ages. It was also known as "mumming" and the word "mommerie" was first recorded in the thirteenth century. It signified the wearing of masks or other disguises, and may have derived from "mommo", the Greek word from a mask.[27] In its original form, mumming was a processional visitation to a home at night with the visitors assuming disguises to conceal their identity. The visitors would present the

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[25] Rigold, 'The St Nicholas or Boy Bishop Tokens', p.92.
[26] For more on pilgrim tokens see above, Chapter 3: Pilgrimage.
[27] Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, p.11.

household with a gift, and the entertainment would continue with dancing.[28] It was especially popular with the nobility and the court. In 1377, the Common Council sent 130 men to salute the young Richard II, "to go on mumming to the said prince". The men rode in pairs with music and torches "clothed in coats and cloaks of red saye or sendall and their vizards well and handsomely made."[29] The procession included men dressed as squires, knights, an emperor, a pope, cardinals and devils.[30] They paraded through the City and then moved on to Kennington Palace where they presented gifts, drank and danced.[31] During the fifteenth century, mumming, as a form of entertainment for the wealthy and the nobility, developed. It became more allegoric and symbolic, and the intention of the "mummers" was to present a moral problem. This could then be debated by the audience. During the reign of Henry VI, for example, John Lydgate, a monk at Bury St Edmunds Abbey, wrote a number of mummings for the court and wealthy merchants. [32] Lydgate's mummings had a clear link with the disguised processions of a tournament, which had an allegorical significance. The allegory of the tournament was interpreted for the spectators by a herald. Four of Lydgate's mummings used a herald whose function was to introduce the gift-bearing visitors, all of whom were silent, and who would then go on to present an allegory. *A Mumming for the Mercers at London* concerns the question of how to combat the fickleness of fortune, whilst *A Mumming at Hertford* debates the perennial conflict between husband and wife for command in the home.[33] The

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[28] Wickham, *Early English Stages:* Vol. I.

[29] Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, p.11

[30] Devils, as shall be shown, were extremely popular disguises.

[31] Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, p.11.

[32] See John Lydgate, *Minor Poems II*, EETS os 192, ed. Henry Noble MacCracken, (Oxford: OUP, 1962), pp. 672-701.

[33] Wickham, *Early English Stages*.

theme of conflict between men and women is a recurrent one in many forms of the carnivalesque.

However, like so much carnivalesque behaviour, mumming could bring people together for entertainment and lively debate, but could also be used to disrupt society. "Mummers", "maskers" and [dis]guisers posed a problem to the law and order of many towns: "the combination of dark evenings and revelers in disguise afforded marvelous opportunities for crime."[34] This is almost certainly the reason behind its earliest reference at Troyes in 1263 as the corporation banned 'momment' amongst the population. In 1405, a municipal order was issued forbidding "mumming" on the streets of London. Similar orders were issued in Bristol and Chester.[35] Mumming was also a concern to the Crown. In 1414, Lollards plotted a coup against Henry V at Eltham Palace "under colour of the mumming", whilst in the third year of Henry VIII's reign, an Act of Parliament prohibited the "wearing of visors" across England as "a company together naming themselves Mummers have come in to the dwelling place of divers men of honour and other substantial persons; and so departed unknown."[36] Disguisings were also used to make a protest about perceived social injustice. People would adopt the visual language of carnival to make a statement about injustices done to, or soon to be carried out upon, them. One of the most famous examples in East Anglia is a popular protest, held in the mid-fifteenth century at Norwich, known as "Gladman's Insurrection".

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[34] Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun*, p.12.
[35] Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England*, p.9.
[36] Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun*, p.12.

On Tuesday 22nd January 1443, John Gladman led a procession through the streets of Norwich. This was also a time when the city was locked in dispute with Holy Trinity Priory over rights to some local grain mills. There are two different accounts of the procession. The first was given at an enquiry into the incident at Thetford, just over a month later. Here it is alleged that the mayor and citizens of Norwich were planning an insurrection, and "then and there arranged for John Gladman of the said city, merchant, to ride in the city on a horse like a crowned king, with a sceptre and a sword before him." A number of other men rode before him "with a crown upon their arms and carrying bows and arrows, as if they were valets of the crown of the lord king." It is also alleged, in this document, that there were a hundred more people following on horseback and foot behind: "They went around urging people in the city to come together and make an insurrection and riots there."[37] The second account appears in a number of drafts amongst a collection of documents that detail the wrongs done to the mayor and citizens of Norwich by two henchman of the Earl of Suffolk. Suffolk had recently passed a judgment which favoured the demolition of the grain mills:

> Wher that it was so that one John Gladman of Norwich, wych was ever and at this oure man of sadde dispocicion and trew and faythfull to god and to the kynge, of disport as is and hever hath bene acustomyd in ony cite or borough throught all thys realme on Fastyngonge Tuesdaye [Shrove Tuesday], in the ende of Crystmasse and by fore Condelmasse mad a disporte wyght hys neyburghs, hawyng his hors trappyd with tynee foyle and other nyse dysgysy

[37] Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich,* pp.149-50.

thynggis corowned as kyng of Cristmesse in token that all myrth that seson

shuld ende, with the xii monthes of the yer afore hym dysgysed after the seson

there of requiryth, and Lenton clad in white with redheryngs skynnys and his

hors trapped with oyster shells after him, in token that sadnesse shuld folowyn

and an holy tyme. And so rod in diverse streets of the cite with othr people

with hym disguysd making myrth, disportes and pleyes…"[38]

In the first account, the authorities interpreted the visual festive vocabulary

employed by those in the procession as a threat of insurrection. For them, this

display was close to treasonable impersonation. Gladman was dressed as a king, and

his followers carried bows and arrows and wore crowns on their sleeves "as if they

were valets of the crown of the lord king."[39] The second account draws on the

imagery of Carnival and Lent to vindicate the citizens. It claims that a king was

represented, but only a mock king who was part of a Shrovetide celebration.

Therefore, the procession was harmless, intent merely on making "myrth, disportes

and pleyes" rather than an attempt to usurp the throne of the kingdom.[40] Most

likely, the incentives behind the procession falls somewhere between both claims.[41]

The procession did not take place at Shrovetide, but on 22nd January, five weeks

before Shrove Tuesday. The second document also suggests that the procession at

Shrovetide was a common phenomenon: "Hever hath bene acustomyd in ony cite or

Borough through al this realme." Chris Humphrey has demonstrated that this

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[38] W. Hudson and J.C.Tingey ed. *Records of the City of Norwich,* 1 (Norwich, 1906), pp. 345-6,
transcribed and printed in Humphrey, *The Politics of Carnival,* p.64.
[39] Gash, 'Carnival Against Lent, p.85.
[40] Humphrey, *The Politics of Carnival*, p.66.
[41] Gash, 'Carnival Against Lent', p.86.

procession was almost unique in England; there is very little evidence for major public celebrations before Lent, probably because of the inclement weather.[42] In fact, one draft of the second document, the phrase "in the end of Crystemasse and byfore Condelmasse" has been inserted after the mention of Shrove Tuesday. This makes clear the fact the city is claiming that Gladman had ridden in a procession which was only *customary* to Shrovetide.[43] It also shows the liminal nature of festival.

Carnival and allegorical imagery was often used outside its 'usual' season to make a statement. As Duffy has said: "whatever his motives, Gladman was able to call on vocabulary derived from the ritual calendar, in which secular and sacred themes, polarities of fast and feast and downright misrule, were difficult to disentangle."[44] Humphrey has argued that the answer to why the Norwich citizens put on this particular pageant lies in its timing. It took place a few days before an assembly was due to seal a document binding the city to dismantle the grain mills. Therefore, a group of citizens chose to stage a public display of their dissatisfaction with the situation. They used visual festive language appropriate to the situation, "confronting [the city's] population with a symbolic dramatization of their own predicament."[45] The population, encountering celebrations outside of the usual calendar context, were forced to think about the procession's purpose and significance. The personification of Lent, a time of fasting, would focus people's thoughts on how the population would be fed once the mills were destroyed. Easter Sunday of 1443 fell on 21st April, just a week before the deadline for the demolition

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[42] Humphrey, *The Politics of Carnival*, p.65.
[43] Humphrey, *The Politics of Carnival*, p.72.
[44] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p.14.
[45] Humphrey, *The Politics of Carnival*, pp.73-74.

of the mills. The fact that Lent appeared at the rear of the procession, symbolizing that "sadnesse should folowyn and an holy tyme", was a representation of the city's predicament. Once Lent was over that year, the mills would be destroyed, and the population would be faced with many problems.[46] Humphries has seen a further advantage in the Carnival imagery; if a defence was needed, it could be argued (as it was), that the actions were entirely harmless. It was play and nothing else.[47] I see this protest as a vivid example of ordinary people using the visual vocabulary and allegory of festival in a sophisticated expression of their fears for their very livelihoods.

Norwich was not the only place in East Anglia where disguising was used to make social commentary. On 16th May 1537, the Duke of Suffolk wrote to Thomas Cromwell, the Lord Privy Seal and the king's principal minister, that he had heard of "a May game played last May day. Which play was of a king how he should rule his realme."[48] As well as a mock king advising Henry VIII how to rule, the Duke was advised of potentially seditious improvisation which had been included within the play: "one [who] played husbandry and said many things against gentlemen more than was in the book of the play."[49] The Duke advised Cromwell that he had "ordered the justices of this shire to have regard to light persons, especially at games and plays."[50] This resulted in the banning of such gatherings in Suffolk for the year: "[The

[46] Humphrey, *The Politics of Carnival*, p.74.

[47] Humphrey, *The Politics of Carnival*, p.75.

[48] *State Papers, Domestic Henry VIII*, vol. xii, pt. I, ed. J. Gardiner (London, 1890), p.557.

[49] *State Papers, Domestic, Henry VIII*, p.557.

[50] *State Papers, Domestic, Henry VIII*, p.557 in Sandra Billington, *Mock Kings in Medieval Society and Renaissance Drama*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p.218.

Duke] will do his best…for staying of the games and assembly of people."[51] It is not stated in which parish this play was performed, but the original report was given to the Duke at the same time as he was informed of "words that Rob[ert] Seman told him of Rich[ard] Bisshope of Bungay, used against the King".[52] It is certainly possible that Bungay was the host parish of the seditious play. Bungay was a known play centre during the time before the Reformation.[53] It was not unusual during the 1540s to find actors in plays speaking out against Henry VIII's policies, and Bungay was situated within easy reach of Diss, where the outspoken poet John Skelton had been rector, and Covehithe, the Suffolk birthplace of playwright John Bale.[54] But it was also, at an earlier date, the location for another protest against perceived social injustice, the expression of which directly involved the imagery of festive culture.

In the Star Chamber Proceedings of 1514 an entry reads: "Wharton, Bailiff of Bungay, with four others, "at XI of the clok on the Frydaye at nyght next after Corpus Christi day, did brake down five pageant of ye seyd inhabitants, that is to saye, hevyn pageant of all ye World, Paradys pagent, Bethelem pagent and helle pagent; the which were eu' wont to be careyd abowt the seyd Town upon the seyd day in honour of the blessed Sacrament."[55] The Bailiff was a civic officer with much responsibility, The fact that his grudge was shared by four others meant that it must have had some kind of civic significance. The choice of the Friday night after Corpus Christi meant that his act would have had least effect upon the pageant. Wright has stated, "these

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[51] *State Papers, Domestic, Henry VIII*, p.585 in Billington, *Mock Kings in Medieval Society*, p.218.
[52] *State Papers, Domestic, Henry VIII*, p.557 in Billington, *Mock Kings in Medieval Society*, p.218.
[53] See above, Chapter 1: The organisation of festive culture.
[54] For more on this type of drama see Alistair Fox, *Politics and literature in the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).
[55] Printed in Wright, *Medieval Theatre in East Anglia*, p.157.

are, it can be imagined, circumstances which could provoke a responsible official into giving highly critical feeling practical expression without wishing to cause undue financial harm."[56] Wright has suggested that Wharton was angry about preferential treatment for the clergy in exemption from tax. This national policy of clerical immunity from tax was manifested in Bungay in the Nunnery, which had been given the privilege on more than one occasion between 1511 and 1514. Wharton was the principal collection of dues in the town, so would have more awareness than most of exactly how much increased demand on other citizens this exemption would bring about. It is, therefore, understandable that he would want to express his fury.[57] Damaging the Corpus Christi pageants which may have been funded, in part, by those who benefitted from the tax exemption, would have brought attention to him. However, he was aware that carrying out this destruction before the procession and accompanying church ale may also harm church income. For this reason he chose to wait for a time when this would not be so.

The sixteenth-century jest book, *A Hundred Merry Tales*, contains the story of another type of disguising in Suffolk, which is also used to prevent an illegal act. It was published in 1526 by John Rastell, and one tale, "Of him that played the Devil and came through the Warren and made them that stole the Conies to run away", is set in Suffolk. In the tale, one John Adroyns played a devil in a stage play in a market town of Suffolk. Once the play was over he had to walk home to his village wearing his devil's costume as he had no change of clothes with him. As he walked through a

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[56] Wright, *Medieval Theatre in East Anglia*, p.399. The two day Corpus Christi event would have begun on Thursday. Therefore, it would have been finished by the Friday night.
[57] Wright, *Medieval Theatre in East Anglia*, p.399.

warren owned by his lord of the manor, he came across a priest and "two or three other unthrifty fellows… to the intent there to get conies." On seeing John Adroyns and believing him to be the devil, they ran away. John Adroyns decided to return the captured rabbits and the thieves' horse to the lord. On arriving at the manor house, the steward "saw well that it was the devil, sat upon a horse, and saw hanging about the saddle on every side the coney-heads hanging down." He tells his master: "By god's body, it is the devil indeed that's at the gate, sitting pon a horse laden with souls; and by likelihood, he is come for your soul purposely, and lacketh but your soul; and if he had your soul, I suppose he should be gone." The lord summons his chaplain with a holy candle and holy water, and confronts the devil: "In the name of the fader, son and holy ghost. I conjure thee and charge thee in the holy name of god to tell me why and wherefore thouh comest hither." When John Adroyns speaks and reveals his reason for being there, he is recognized, "and so all the aforesaid fear and dread was turned into mirth and disport." [58]

Victor Scherb has said that this "anecdote invokes a social context marked by a certain degree of tension."[59] The poaching suggests class antagonism between landowners and others, and this type of theft was not unknown in the Blything Hundred. The fact that a priest is involved is reminiscent of the "poaching canons" of Blythburgh.[60] In 1442, three canons appeared in the manorial court accused of poaching rabbits using greyhounds from the lord of the manor's warren. It is

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[58] See Norman Scarfe, *Suffolk in the Middle Ages*, (Wodbridge: Boydell, 1986), pp.167-168.
[59] Victor Scherb, *Staging Faith: East Anglian Drama in the Latter Middle Ages*, (London: Associated Universities Press, 2001), p.37.
[60] See Alan Mackley ed., *The Poaching Priors of Blythburgh*, (Beccles: The Blythburgh Society, 2002), pp.4-5.

recorded that the prior of Holy Trinity Priory was aware of these actions.[61] Scherb

further states that, although this story elaborates social tensions, it also suggests that

this tension can be resolved through drama. He also refers to the "incarnational

aesthetic" of East Anglia, which gave people a tendency to visualize the things of the

spirit in bodily form: "In the Merry Tale, a stage devil is easily mistaken for a true one

because costuming conventions, artistic representations and popular imagination

coincide."[62] I see this tale as having similarities to Gladman's insurrection.   In

Norwich, costuming conventions and artistic representations were deliberately

employed to make a statement about social injustice and voice fears about people's

everyday lives.   In this tale, although John Adroyns is dressed as a devil through

necessity and does not deliberately set out to confront the thieves, the outcome

means that a threat to his lord's livelihood is avoided. And even if the feudal society

of Suffolk was less strict by the early sixteenth century, any threat to the lord's

livelihood would still have a direct impact upon his tenants.

Drama and carnival

As Scherb has stated, one of the reasons that John Adroyns was so easily mistaken

was because the thieves were used to costuming conventions and artistic

representations of devils. This conventional styling of a devil can be clearly seen in

one of Suffolk's surviving doom painting at St Peter's, Wenhaston. This painting is full

of commonplace portrayals of the Last Judgement. In the bottom

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[61] Becker, *Blythburgh*, p.25. It has also been suggested that one canon leased out well-trained greyhounds to other poachers. A record was made in 1448 that "Edmund, fellow canon of the priory keeps a ferret for poaching." Later, a complaint was made that the 'canis pessimus' of Robert Finch, chaplain, had been killing sheep.
[62] Scherb, *Staging Faith*, p.37.

right section is a gaping-tooth jawed monster with a large snout and glaring eyes. Its jaws are crammed with figures of damned souls and a devil drags on the leg of another figure being cast into the hell mouth. Other figures which are on their way to hell are held back by a red chain, and a cloven-hoofed devil with clawed hands wields a four-pronged meat hook. One three-dimensional version of this portrayal, without the devils, is found on a choir-stall arm-rest at St Edmund's, Southwold. This indicates what a universal depiction of the hell-mouth the Wenhaston portrayal is. In the left-hand side of what would, originally, have been the crucifix is a representation of St Michael and a devil. The devil has wings, large pointed ears, a hooked nose and tail. It also appears to have another devil face in its belly. The devil's legs are covered in breeches, painted to be indicative of fur suggestive of a costume worn in a play.[63] These universal depictions of particular characters in the arts explain why it would be easy to imagine that John Adroyn's thieves, already suffering from guilt, would mistake him for a devil.

The artistic conventions employed by the Wenhaston doom artist also provides a clue as to which devil this is. The words on the open scroll that it holds, when translated strictly, make no sense.[64] This suggests, however, that the devil is Titivillus, a very popular character in European literature and drama during the Middle Ages.[65] Sermons referred to the sack in which he collected syllables and syncopated words

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[63] Kathleen Whale 'The Wenhaston Doom: A Biography of A Sixteenth-Century Panel Painting', *PSIAH*, 39, Part 3 (1999), pp.303-4.
[64] Whale, 'The Wenhaston Doom', p.111.
[65] Whale has suggested that the devil may be Satan and the Latin is gibberish from ignorance of simply because the doom would be too far away for people to see the words written on the scroll.

and verses which clerics stole from God by lazily omitting them from their prayers.[66]

Titivillus is one of the characters in the East Anglian play of *Mankind*. His entrance is preceded by a demand for money:

> NEW GYSE: 3o go þi wey. We xall [*shall*] gaþer mony onto
>
> Ellys þer xall no man hym se.
>
> Now gostly to owr purpose, worschypfull soverence,
>
> We intende to gather mony, yf yt plesse yowr neclygence,
>
> For a man wyth a hede þat [is] of grett omnipotens…
>
>
> NOWADAYS: He lovyth no grotys, nor pens or to pens.
>
> Gyf ws rede reyallys yf 3e wyll se hys abhomynabull presens.
>
> (ll. 460-462, 465-6)

This makes clear that the character of a devil in a play was very popular, further evidence of which can be found in other East Anglian plays. *The Conversion of St Paul*, includes an inserted scene written in a later hand, involving the demons Belial and Mercury.[67] Darryl Grantley has described this insertion as "principally to add some dramatic spice to the play."[68] The players who owned the surviving script of *The Conversion of St Paul* knew that playgoers loved a good stage-devil and added this scene to attract a larger audience. The Chamberlains' Accounts of the town of Aldeburgh show that the borough authorities owned a costume for a stage-devil. In 1583, 2s 6d was paid for "the deville Coate"; in October 1583 Lionel Manclarke was paid 10d for "making of the deville Coate"; and in December 1583 12d was paid for

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[66] Walker, *Medieval Drama*, pp.258, 280.

[67] Donald C. Baker et al eds., *Three Late Medieval Religious Plays of Bodelian MSS Digby 133 and E Museo 160*, EETS, 283, (Oxford: OUP, 1982).

[68] Darryl Grantley, 'Saints' plays', in Beadle ed.*The Cambridge Comapnion* (2008), p.278.

"payntinge of ye deville coat".[69] It is clear that Aldeburgh townspeople enjoyed a stage-devil as much as anyone else.

As well as Titivillus, *Mankind* contains a number of other carnivalesque features. Some of these features caused *Mankind* to be seen as crude and provincial early in its critical history.[70] Some editors and critics described it as "degraded",[71] whilst Elbert Thompson remarked that "the moral tenure of the piece is submerged in the rude banter and obscene jesting".[72] By the 1940s, however, opinions on the carnivalesque elements of *Mankind* had changed and Sister Mary Coogan interpreted it as a Shrovetide play with Lenten themes.[73] There has been some debate as to the actual period of the year that is represented in the play. It is definitely winter:

> MYSCHEFF: For a winter corn-threscher, ser, I have hyryde.   (l.54)

> NEW GYSE: The wether ys colde. Gode send ws good ferys. (l.324)

It is not known, however, if this winter setting is near Christmas, as implied by a 'Crystemes songe' (ll.336-344), or at Shrovetide.[74] The play certainly includes Shrovetide themes. Pamela King has argued that it only makes sense as part of a Shrovetide festivity, identifying that the texts Mercy quotes from the book of Job were part of the Ash Wednesday liturgy, especially:

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[69] John C. Coldewey ed. *Playing Companies at Aldeburgh: 1566-1635*, (Oxford: Malone Society Collections, 1971) p.20.

[70] See Anne Brannen, '100 years of *Mankind* criticism: how a very bad play became good', *Medieval Perspectives*, 15 (2000), pp.11-20.

[71] E.K. Chambers, *The Medieval Stage*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903), p.62; F.J. Furnivall and Alfred W. Pollard eds., *The Macro Plays*, (1903), xvii, in Bruster and Rasmussen eds, *Everyman and Mankind*, p.33.

[72] Elbert N.S. Thompson, 'The English Moral Plays' in *Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 14 (1910), p.320 in Bruster and Rasmussen eds., *Everyman and Mankind*, p.33.

[73] Mary Philippa Coogan, *An Interpretation of the Moral Play* Mankind, (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1947) in Bruster and Rasmussen eds., *Everyman and Mankind*, p.33.

[74] The Christmas period, however, ran right up until the start of Lent.

MERCY: *Memento, homo, quod cinis es est in cinerem revertis*

[Remember, man, you are dust, and to dust you shall return.] (l.322)[75]

This seems to suggest a Shrovetide setting as Lent was not a time for plays. G.A. Lester has suggested that the *Mankind* dramatist probably achieved much of the effect of misrule, which is part of carnivalesque behaviour, by borrowing from folk plays.[76] The features that *Mankind* shares with folk plays include the aforesaid collection of money; singing and dancing (especially lines 336-344); a fight; its seasonal, winter-time nature; and the use of a familiar character (Titivillus), whose arrival is anticipated by the audience and deliberately built up by the actors. Titivillus "introduces an element of grotesque comic humour" through his costume, which may well have been similar to his portrayal in the Wenhaston doom, a large false head or mask and probably much roaring and shouting off-stage:[77]

TITIVILLUS: I com wyth my leggys wnder me   (l.455)

Much of the 'degraded' language and action of which the early critics disapproved is found in the singing of the bawdy "Crystemes song" which requires audience participation. Later critics have reinterpreted this section. Tom Pettit has argued that the carnivalesque elements of this part of the play places it within the European tradition of *Fastnachtspiel*, the German carnival,[78] whilst Lester has said that, "*Mankind* relies most heavily upon its bawdy humour…to make its moral point."[79]

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[75] King, 'Morality Plays', p.250.
[76] Lester, *Three Late Medieval Morality Plays*, p.xxii. In the absence of any surviving texts of medieval Folk Plays, Lester compares *Mankind* eighteenth-century Mummers Plays.
[77] Lester, *Three Late Medieval Morality Plays*, p.xxiii.
[78] Pettit, 'Mankind: an English Fastnachtspiel?' in *Festive Drama*, ed. Twycross, King, *Mankind*, p.245.
[79] Lester, *Three Late Medieval Morality Plays*, p.xxii.

The audience is not aware when they begin of the foul language they will be forced to use in this song:

>NOUGHT: Yt ys wreten wyth a coll, yt ys wreten wyth a cole…
>
>He þat schythyth wyth hys holl, he þat schytyth wyth hys holl…
>
>But he wyppe hys arse clen, he wyppe hys ars clen…
>
><div align="right">(ll. 336, 338, 340)</div>

The song ends with all three vices and the audience singing, "Holylyke, holyke, holyke!" (l.344). Walker has suggested that this is a scatological parody of 'Holy, holy, holy" implying both "hole-ly" and "hole-lick".[80] It is in keeping with the scatological visual humour of the time found particularly on misericords and other church carvings, described as "bum-exposing, bum-venerating and –kissing figures".[81] Walker has also argued that the invitation to the audience to join in with the Vices' behaviour is to encourage them, like Mankind, to delight in their "boisterous irreverent antics in preference to the…inflexible ideological positions of the virtues."[82] As Twycross has put it, at this point in the play, "virtue is no fun: vice is."[83]

The polarity between 'good' speech and 'bad' speech is a major theme of the play. Anthony Gash has described *Mankind* as "a Janus-faced play in which a stilted courtly style is explicitly associated with the Church as a temporal authority and set against

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[80] Walker, *Medieval Drama*, p.266, n.27.

[81] Christa Grossinger, *The World Upside-Down: English Misericords*, (London: Harvey Miller, 1997), p.109.

[82] Walker, *Medieval Drama*, p.89.

[83] Meg Twycross, *The Theatricality of Medieval English Plays*, in Beadle, ed. *The Cambridge Companion*, (2008) p.63.

an underworld of festive, tavern, comic infernal and excremental language…"[84]

Mercy is the exponent of the 'courtly' style:

> MERCY: He was of yowr nature and of yowr fragylyte;
>
> Follow þe steppys of hym, my own swete son,
>
> And sey as he seyde in yowr trobyll and adversyte:
>
> *Dominus dedit, Dominus obstulit, sicut sibi placuti,*
>
> *ita fact; nomine Domini benedictum!*   (ll.289-293)

This is in keeping with the Mankind's description of him: "*3*e be aproxymatt to God and nere of Hys consell" (l.223). Mercy also refuses to use base language when challenged to do so by Nowadays:

> NOWADAYS: I prey yow hertyly, worschyppull clerke,
>
> To have þis Englysch mad in Laten:
>
> "I have etun of dyschfull of curdys,
>
> Ande I have scheten yowr mouth full of turdys." (ll.129-32)

As we have already seen, the vices' own vocabulary is the complete opposite to Mercy's. They call Mercy's "to-gloreyde" (l.774), but when they attempt to translate their own language into Latin, "*Osculare fundamentum*" (l.142), they believe Mercy to be irritated by their "eloquence".

In the previous chapter it was suggested that *Mankind* would be suitable for a Christmas or New Year entertainment for a gathering of a wide cross-section of society. The play itself seems to state that it has something for everyone. It is not just the extremes of language in the play that would reach out to many different

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[84] Gash, 'Carnival Against Lent', p.80.

types of people. One of the main scenes, a mock-trial scene, described as a "comic *tour de force*",[85] is an excellent choice for a play intended for a wide audience. A manor court was an easily recognizable situation as everyone from the villeins to the lord of the manor, or his representative, was expected to attend.[86] The scene opens with Myscheff, presiding as judge, saying:

> MYSCHEFF: *Carici tenta generalis*,
>
> In a place þer goode ale ys
>
> *Anno regni regitalis*
>
> *Edwardi nullateni…*
>
> *Anno regni regis nulli*   (ll. 688-91, 693)

Everyone who attended the manor court would be able to understand this as a parody of the opening to a manor court roll. It is likely that most of the court proceedings would be carried out in English, but the date of the court would have been given in Latin by the steward at the start. The vices, as judges, force Mankind to strip half naked and make solemn vows. Gash sees in this a further Shrovetide parody which would have been recognizable by everyone. An offender of Church law was often paraded in public dressed only in a vest and hose, or a short shirt or vesture.[87] However, instead of recanting his infidelity as was custom for this penance, here Mankind is told to swear disloyalty to the Church and loyalty to the tavern:

> NOWADAYS: On Sundays on þe morrow, erly betyme
>
> 3e xall wyth ws to þe all-house erly to go dyn,

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[85] Gash, 'Carnival Against Lent', p.87.
[86] Many copyhold entries for holdings from the lord of the manor include the phrase *sectam curia* ('suite of court') as part of the customary dues.
[87] Gash, 'Carnival Against Lent', p.88.

> And forbade masse and matens, owres and prime.
>
> "I wyll", say 3e.
>
> MANKIND: I wyll, ser.   (ll.711-14)

Gash also noted that the rhythm of the chant in this part of the scene suggests plainsong.[88] Again, this would be familiar to everyone present at the play who also attended church. If the scene was played out in this way, the contradiction between the content of the speech and its performance would suggest another comic parody. In this scene, a familiar aspect of people's everyday lives is represented in an aspect of festive culture.

There is further East Anglian evidence of a connection between the quotidian duty of attendance at a manor court and dramatic festivity. In the later part of the fifteenth century, the Paston family were involved in a bitter feud with the Duke of Suffolk. In 1478 an agent of John Paston II was present to witness a spectacular outburst by the Duke against the Pastons:

> his [the Duke's] bearing that no man played Herod in Corpus Christi play better
> and more agreeable to his pageant than he did. But you shall understand that
> it was afternoon, and the weather hot, and he so feeble for sickness that his
> legs would not bear him, but there were two men had great pain to keep him
> on his feet, and there were you judged. Some said "Slay"; some said "Put him
> in prison." And forth came my lord and he would meet you with a spear, and

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[88] Gash, 'Carnival Against Lent, p.88

have none other amends for the trouble that you have put him to but your heart's blood, and that he will get with his own hands.[89]

This was a performance of power- a show by one landowner against another, and the assembled tenants would certainly have become a talking point in the parish and beyond. Word-of-mouth would have ensured that the Paston family's tenants, employees and neighbours learned of the Duke's extreme anger and promise of action. The choice of imagery in this record is also evidence of how festive culture was part of everyday life for rural people. The entertainment and spectacle of plays performed on the feast of Corpus Christi were clearly never far from people's minds. The Paston steward recalls the bombastic character of Herod from the York Corpus Christi plays. Herod's threat to the Magi sounds somewhat like Suffolk's threat against the Pastons:

> Now kings, to catch all care aware,
>
> Since ye are come out of your kith [native land]
>
> Look not ye ledge against our lay, [speak against our law]
>
> Upon pain to lose both limb and lith. [ll.201-204][90]

It is easy to see why the Duke of Suffolk's tenants, attendant at a manor court, would compare the enraged Duke with a character from a play.

Sport and carnival

The mock court scene of *Mankind* ends with the following lines:

> NEW GYSE: What, how, ostelere, hostlere! Lende ws a football!

[89] PL No. 817 in Bennett, *The Pastons and their World*.

[90] Richard Beadle and Pamela M. King eds., *York Mystery Plays: A Selection in Modern Spelling*, (Oxford: OUP, 1995), p.72.

<div align="center">Whoppe whow! Anow, anow, anow, anow!   (ll. 733-4)</div>

This has been interpreted as another indicator of the play's Shrovetide setting.[91]

Football, in all its forms, has historic connections with festive culture and carnivalesque behaviour through its "decided element of licensed misrule".[92] Lester has written about it connection with Shrovetide saying that football was "one of the ways of enjoying a final fling before the austerities to come."[93] One of the earliest mentions of the game, from London, c.1180, directly links it with festival:

> Moreover, each day upon the day called Carnival… After dinner all the youth of
>
> the City goes out into the fields to a much-frequented game of ball and almost
>
> all the workers of each trade have theirs also in their hands… and it seems that
>
> the motion of their natural heat is kindled by the contemplation of such violent
>
> motion and by their partaking in the joys of untrammelled youth.[94]

This account does not mention the violence of the game, but most other writers do. In 1321, a canon of Shouldham Priory in Norfolk accidentally killed a friend whilst competing for the ball.[95] By the sixteenth century, writers were attacking it vociferously. In 1531, Sir Thomas Elyot, writing to encourage development of better educated and more polished social elite describe football as "nothing but beastly fury and extreme violence, whereof procedeth hurt, and consequently rancor and extreme malice do remain."[96] The ever-disgruntled Philip Stubbes, writing in 1583,

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[91] Gash, 'Carnival Against Lent', p.88.
[92] Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, p.154.
[93] Lester, *Three Late Medieval Morality Plays*, p.xxxvi.
[94] Steve Roud, *The English Year*, p.53.
[95] Magoun, 'Football in Medieval England', p.37 in Dymond, 'A Lost Social Institution, p.179.
[96] Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, p.154.

described football as "a devilish pastime... a bloody and murdering practice..." before going on to describe the violence of the game in vivid detail.[97]

Despite the violence, however, the game was extremely popular; several official bodies organized games on Shrove Tuesday. Just as the Cratfield churchwardens provided a ball for the parish camping match, the Chester Shoemakers' Company provided a ball for a game through the streets on the afternoon of Shrove Tuesday.[98] The city corporation finally intervened in 1540, and forced a substitution of a foot-race because of the "great inconvenience" caused by "evil disposed persons" among players.[99] Technically, however, football was an illegal sport. It was banned in London in 1314 and in 1388, a statute forbade "all importune" games, including tennis, quoits, football and "pleyes at the ball nother [neither] hand nor foote." A 1409/1410 statute required that labourers and servants should "utterly leave playing at the Balls, as well as Hand-ball as Foot-ball." Offenders were to receive "Imprisonment by Six Days".[100] It is not clear whether these bans were brought into force to curb violence and damage to people or property, or because men (and women) preferred to play football rather than carry out their usual work. A recently discovered document, which contains probably the earliest reference to camping in Suffolk, shows that authorities took violence at camping matches very seriously. At the coastal manor of Hollesley four pairs of men were brought into court for being involved in a bloody assault. These offences were bracketed together, in a later

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[97] Philip Stubbes, *Anatomie of Abuses*, p.83.
[98] For the Cratfield camping match see above, Chapter 5: Festive Culture as Entertainment.
[99] Lawrence Clopper ed. *Records of Early English Drama: Chester*, (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1979), p.li – liii in Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, p.154.
[100] Magoun, 'Football in Medieval England', 36-37; *Statutes of the Realm*, Vol 2, p57: 12 Rich II, c.6 (1388); p163: 11 Henry IV, c4 (1409-10) in Dymond, *Lost Social Institution*, p.171.

hand, with the word "camping" inserted next to the bracket.[101] It is thought that this camping match took place in Whitsun week, rather than Shrovetide, which, as we have seen, was the favoured time in England for Maygames, church ales, plays and other social gatherings.[102]

It is clear through documents such as this from Hollesley that the authorities needed to keep a close eye on football games. They were the perfect opportunity for revenges to be taken, and disputes and grudges to be confronted, in an extremely physical way. This could be done under the cover of the natural violence of the game. At Chesterton in Cambridgeshire, in true carnivalesque style (town v. gown), a football match was played between the village team and some university students. Egged on by a high constable, who was subsequently imprisoned, the villagers, at a signal, seized staves and other weapons which they had hidden in the church porch. They violently attacked their opponents. Some students were only able to escape by swimming across the River Cam.[103] As has been shown with disguisings and mummings, authorities had other reasons to be concerned about football matches. They feared the violence of the game and the gathering of large numbers of spectators, as it might result in more general disorder, crime and even rebellion. In 1555, football was classed together with other illegal sports and entertainments, and associated with "unlaufull Assemblies, Conventicales, Sedicions and Conspiracies…

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[101] Possibly the steward, Aspal, of the capital pledgers, felt it necessary to explain the assault.
[102] John Ridgard, 'Suffolk's Earliest Football Match at Hollesley in 1320', *Suffolk Review,* NS 59, Autumn 2012. Although the court roll does not make it clear whether this was one or more matches-the court met only twice a year.
[103] Heywood & T Wright, *Cambridge University Transactions*, 1 (London, 1854), 305-11, in Dymond, 'A Lost Social Institution', p.179.

daily secretly practiced by ydle and misruled persons."[104] In Suffolk, camping appears

to have been used, in a similar manner to Gladman's Insurrection and the Bungay

pageant wagon destruction, to express dissatisfaction with a legal decision. In 1549,

at Leiston, certain violent events were said to have happened in the "campyng tyme".

In 1543, an agreement had been made to divide the ancient commons of the manor

into parts which were to be private or 'several' to the lessee of the manor, whilst

other parts were still subject to common rights. This agreement held until 1549,

when local inhabitants entered the 'several' grounds, grazed their own animals there,

stole sheep and horses belonging to the lessee and terrorized his wife and daughters.

Dymond sees the phrase 'campyng tyme' as a reference to the sport of camping and

its popularity at times of general festivity and disturbance. It may also hint that the

inhabitants chose to make their protest by entering the forbidden commons under

the guise of camping.[105]

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed use of aspects of festival which had could both unite a

community and highlight divisions between sections of society. The European

festival of carnival has had a long association with social upheaval, and it provided a

visual and allegorical language for subordinate groups to express their

dissatisfactions. In Norfolk and Suffolk, universal, allegorical forms of carnival

language were adopted to present protests against threats to people's food supplies,

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[104] *Statues of the Realm*, Vol IV, Pt 1 (London, 1819), p285: 2&3 Phil & Mary, c9 (1555), in Dymond, 'A Lost Social Institution", p.181.

[105] NA STAC 3/4/7 in Dymond, 'A Lost Social Institution', p.182. Diarmid MacCulloch has come to the conclusion that the phrase 'campyng tyme' actually referred to encampments established by rebels at places such as Mousehold Heath. Diarmid MacCulloch, 'Kett's Rebellion in context' in *Rebellion, Popular Protest and the Social Order*, ed. P. Slack (Cambridge, 1984), p.41.

extreme decisions by the monarchy on the running of the country, and tax exemptions for the wealthy which would impact upon the less fortunate. All of these were the concerns of ordinary people for their everyday lives, and the language of festive culture was used to give expression to these concerns. It also exposed and widened the divisions between ordinary people and the authorities. The same type of behaviour and the same visual language, however, could also unite communities. In some cases, such as the Boy Bishop ceremony, the behaviour were used in a controlled way to allow subordinate groups to become, temporarily, the authority. At these times, the subordinate groups were unified in their actions. However, society as a whole was also unified at these times; the social hierarchy was confirmed when this behaviour came to a natural end and the previous positions were resumed. The same type of language and behaviour were also used in aspects of festivity making them accessible to everyone, thus again unifying society as a whole.   In a similar manner to festivities connected with the landscape, the use of carnivalesque behaviour is another example of the ambivalence of festive culture.

Conclusion

This study has considered the relationship between festive culture and rural communities in Suffolk in the pre-Reformation period. Many previous studies have implied that festive culture is something "other" to the everyday, that times of festivity were a break from the quotidian, a period in which to escape working life. The present study, however, has argued for a reconceptualisation of this relationship. It has shown that festive culture was an important part of the everyday, and that it is not possible to separate one from the other.

Festive Culture and Communities

In many ways, the manifestation of festive culture was definitely a communal activity, designed both to fashion and perpetuate rural communities. Chapter One, especially, highlighted the importance of festive culture as a communal fundraising activity in any given Suffolk parish, much of which was in aid of the church. In rural parishes, a community was usually constituted through and based around the church. The community was focused upon the church through compulsory attendance at Mass, and a shared desire to communicate with God and the saints. The church, therefore, became an articulation, even an embodiment, of the community.

Chapter One demonstrated the extraordinary festive efforts made on the part of parishes to raise enough money to ensure that their church was kept as a suitable house for God. Profits of hundreds, sometimes thousands, of today's pounds were

achieved through gatherings, drinkings, plays and other entertainments. Chapter Four also discussed the community's collective responsibility to ensure the church was kept in a suitable manner, and the importance of high value items to church ritual. Items of a valuable nature, both financial and personal, such as clothing and jewellery were donated to saints' images in supplication or to give thanks. However, Chapter Four has also shown that parishioners took a pragmatic approach to furnishing the church and providing portable items. Donation of everyday household items such as towels, tablecloths and sheets made financial as well as devotional sense. The two were not somehow distinct or opposed. Economic recycling also brought about a quasi-magical transformation in the status of the everyday object. Clothing became vestments, and household items cleaned sacred vessels and came into contact with the Host, elevated by their proximity to God. Everyday objects were, therefore, raised to items of high ritual significance. It may be that the parishioners hoped the same would happen to them; even the lowliest member of a rural community might devoutly hope for entry into the Kingdom of Heaven.

A community's interaction with festive culture did not just take place inside the church, however. Rural communities were profoundly dependent on the landscape and the natural environment for their livelihoods, and Chapter Two discussed ritual used upon the landscape at certain festivals to ensure its on-going fertility and protect everyday livelihoods. Rituals used as part of processions would also ratify boundaries, and confirm the ownership of the landscape, and of grazing and common rights which were so essential to rural communities. Chapter Six, however,

demonstrated that communities would also use aspects of festive culture to express any concerns about threats to their everyday livelihoods. The allegorical language of carnival could unify a society by confirming the social hierarchy when used in a controlled way to give subordinate groups authority for a specified period of time. Yet it could also be used as a visual protest when communities were angry with authorities posing some form of threat to their way of life.

Festive Culture and Individuals

This thesis has shown that festive culture not only impacted upon the everyday lives of communities, it was also an important part of the lives of individuals. Chapter One argued that, whilst many in a parish could enjoy times of communal festivity as a break from the daily grind, for some individuals the enormous organizational detail of these events became an essential part of their everyday lives. Churchwardens and others were responsible for ensuring that festivity was used so that, financially, it could support the most important building of a pre-Reformation community: the church. In turn, these events could also, if administered properly, bring whole communities together no matter how scattered they were geographically. A well-organized communal event could also reaffirm social cohesion. Beyond this, however, Chapter One demonstrated that some individuals, through their organization of more solemn expressions of festive culture, were responsible for others' eternal souls. If these individuals did not fulfill their responsibilities to the very best of their abilities, an immortal soul could be in peril. Festive culture did not play a part simply in temporal lives; its manifestation had an impact upon the eternal as well.

Chapter Five demonstrated the importance of festive culture as a source of income for individuals in rural communities. Parishioners provided essential services to the parish at times of festivity, and the financial remuneration for these services was essential for household budgets. As Chapters One and Four argued, some livelihoods, such as those of the sexton and parish laundress, were based entirely upon providing services for times of ritual and festivity. For those involved in the care of liturgical items and vestments, especially women, their everyday working lives allowed access to objects that had particular sacred significance. This must have seemed particularly important since, they may have had very little contact with these items during the holy rites themselves.

Chapter Three demonstrated that rural parishioners used aspects of festive culture to help them with everyday dilemmas. Sometimes they would undertake pilgrimages to local shrines when they were concerned about minor ailments, household problems or mislaid objects. Again, festivals were definitely breaks from the hard work of daily life, a time of communal relaxation and enjoyment, but for some they were something which were very much part of the quotidian. As Chapter Five has shown, times of celebration and relaxation were the basis of some people's main income for others, especially for professional entertainers such as musicians and actors. But this was a more widespread phenomenon. In a similar manner to many rural parishioners across England, those of Suffolk made a living from agriculture, and some from international trade. For estate owners, farmers and those working in coastal parishes, part of their income was made through providing for times of celebration, or importing luxury items which would transform a

celebratory meal from ordinary, everyday food to something unusual and exciting. For these individuals, times of festivity were an year-round matter. A similar case can be made for householders, especially women, for whom preparation for festive occasions were an on-going task throughout the year. Times of festivity and celebration could be a drain on both time and household finance. It was, therefore, important to budget and organize well in advance.

The commerciality of festive culture

The commercial aspects of festive culture has been addressed in detail in the present study. As has already been noted, Chapter One introduced the economics of festivity, demonstrating its importance as a fundraising tool. Through its examination of the logistics and mechanics of such fundraisers, Chapter One also argued that considering commerciality is important for any study of festive culture. Chapter Three examined the ritual of pilgrimage in what I hope is a new way: arguing that many people in the pre-Reformation period viewed pilgrims as commodities with particular financial value. Those who lived and worked along pilgrimage routes could make a lucrative income providing for pilgrims' needs. Communities of retailers and hospitality providers grew up around shrines, and their range of services covered costly- ornaments and clothing for wealthy pilgrims, as well as daily neccesities: lodging, warmth and food.

A parish, however, did not need to be the location of a shrine to benefit from the pilgrimage trade. Many pilgrims would travel long distances, and owners of inns, ale houses and other trades on pilgrimage routes would profit from them. Moreover,

those, based in coastal parishes, such as those in Suffolk, made an income from the international pilgrimage trade.   Mariners profited from carrying pilgrims to the European mainland, they would employ local sailors as crew and use local sources for provisions needed for each crossing.   Therefore, many within a coastal community and further afield would benefit.   Viewing pilgrimage through the commerciality of their voyages has shown that pilgrims really were commodities. They were not the only cargo on board the ships, and were just one part of cross-channel trade.   By studying the ritual of pilgrimage from the point of view of those living on pilgrimage routes, it is possible to demonstrate that, whilst pilgrims were involved in something which was "other" to their own sense of the quotidian, for those they encountered on the journey, pilgrims were very much sources of income and, therefore, important for sustaining everyday lives.

The ambivalence of festival

The main conclusion of this study has shown that festive culture and the everyday overlapped at all times.   They were not distinct entities and it was not possible to separate them completely.   It is perhaps appropriate, therefore, that another conclusion that can be drawn from this study is the ambivalence of festival. Chapters Two and Six demonstrated the "opposing" functions of festival time.   As has been shown through other studies, the types of festive behaviour associated with the tradition of carnival highlighted divisions in society as subordinate groups were allowed, in a controlled way, to become, temporarily the authority.   However, the same behaviour also unified society at these times as the social hierarchy was confirmed when the behaviour came to a natural end and previous positions were

resumed. Even so, as we have seen through Chapter Six, the same festive behaviour was used by rural communities to express concerns for their everyday lives. Aspects of festivity could unify communities but, at the same time, it could highlight divisions in society as a whole. Chapter Two demonstrated the ambivalence of festival through rituals intended to protect the landscape and environment which rural parishioners were so dependent upon. Festivals could ratify boundaries, and confirm ownership and access rights, whilst unifying a community through its shared actions. At the same time, festivals could allow these boundaries to be broken and the landscape to be violated, and exacerbate rivalries between communities, rivalries which may have spilled over into less formal activities, such as campball, discussed in Chapter Five. Alternatively, football matches might give way to rivalries and even violent behaviour which then mght reverberate in more formal contexts, such as the beating of parish boundaries. This study has also shown that the ambivalence of festival was often most heightened when the everyday life of a community was threatened, be it through a sense of unfair taxation, or through destruction of essential utilities, or through poaching and stealing, and boundary disputes. That is to say, all types of festive behaviour was performed in a complex context, constituted both by other forms of festival and, at the same time, more quotidian behaviours.

Where next?

Clearly, there is much to be learned from this unusually deep and close study of festive culture in one county. It has produced a new framework which has plenty to offer social historians. As a methodological tool studying a wide range of festivities

it is valuable as it changes and furthers our understanding of the relationship between the quotidian and the festive in the pre-Reformation period. By using this framework, historians can consider festive culture as something which was not exceptional, and its application can highlight similarities between the everyday working lives of rural and urban communities. At the same time, it can identify that which is distinct about the festive culture of regional communities- Suffolk or East Anglia, Devon or the West Country, England or Wales. Regional identities appear to have been quite marked in the pre-Reformation period, but the present methodology produces new ways of thinking about evidence which might help historians come to a closer understanding of the extent of the differences between regions. The evidence available is, after all, finite, but by interpreting it in a new and alternative way, historians may be able to conclude that regions were even more similar, or more markedly different, than is, at present, perceived.

The new framework which has been formed by this study also forces historians to think more carefully about how evidence produced by projects such as *REED* are used. As was discussed earlier, both Holland and Beadle have criticized this type of records editing as it removes evidence from its crucial social and economic context.[1] This study has argued that it is not possible to isolate evidence of festive culture. It is inseparable from the everyday and, therefore, needs to be analysed alongside all other evidence for the history of communities, be they rural, urban, regional or nationwide.

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[1] See above, Introduction.

Furthermore, this argument has scope for expanding on an international level. The 2010 "East Anglia and the North Sea World" conference at the University of East Anglia demonstrated that Norfolk and Suffolk owed much of their identity to their place within a wider "North Sea World", a world stretching from the English Channel to Iceland and the Baltic. As a whole, papers given at this conference showed that, in the pre-Reformation period, this area was very much a community bound together by the North Sea, sharing commercial, artistic, architectural and religious exchanges.[2] In addition, as Pettitt has shown through his study of *Mankind* and its relationship with German *Fastnachtspiel*, there is much potential in study comparing East Anglian festive culture and the festive culture of the North Sea World.[3] Again I concur, but I would still argue for a framework in which festive culture is firmly embedded in the everyday life. This might well trigger new interpretations of evidence otherwise. Moreover, this type of study would naturally highlight similarities between the two traditions, yet at the same time it would also demonstrate that which is particularly significant about East Anglian festive culture.

Finally, the present study has also emphasized the importance of considering the commerciality of festive culture. A large proportion of the evidence for late medieval festive culture is financial. Therefore, it is essential that both the consumerism and commerciality of festive culture are taken into account in any study, particularly those which span a geographical area, such as that of the North Sea World which was involved, heavily, in trade. Although this study has focused on

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[2] A collection of essays which is the result of this conference was very recently published, David Bates and Robert Liddiard eds, *East Anglia and its North Sea World in the Middle Ages*, (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2013).
[3] Pettit, '*Mankind*, an English *Fastnachtspiel*?'

festive culture in one particular area, it has demonstrated that, no matter which location, human behaviour did not have clear limits. In the pre-Reformation period, people did not think of the festive and the quotidian as binary opposites. Their actions showed that the festive and the everyday would merge, easily, one into the other, into one experiential whole.

Appendix: Provision and Costs for sailings from Southwold

1a: Crew of the Iceland ships

Crew	£	S	d
Master	11		
Master's Servant	Incl. in Master's wages		
Skave Master[1] x2	9	10	
Boatswain[2]	4	6	12
'Men' x20	64	13	6
Gunner		54	4
Carpenter	6		
Cook		46	8
Merchant[3]	8		
Soldier[4]		40	
Total = 30	**110**	**11**	**6**

1b: Cost of food and provisions for the Iceland ships

Food and Drink	£	S	d
18 butts/barrels of beer	18	36	4
18 seam of wheat	18	10	
36 flytches of bacon[5]	4	5	

[1] Fishermen placed in charge of fishing operation. David Butcher, *Rigged for River and Sea: A researcher's guide to late medieval and early modern terms relating to fishing and associated trades,* (Hull, North Atlantic Fisheries History Association, 2008)

[2] 3rd in command. Butcher, *Rigged for River and Sea*

[3] I presume that the merchant was employed to conduct business on arrival in Iceland. He was probably either a skilled fisherman or sailor as well.

[4] I presume that both the gunner and soldier were employed for protection of the vessel in a time when England would have been at war with at least one other European power and when piracy was commonplace.

2 barrels of white herring	1	7	
2,000 ship's biscuit	2		
180 loaves of bread		15	
1½ bushel of oatmeal		2	6
½ hundredweight of cod	1	6	8
¼ of haberdine[6]		6	4
2 hundredweight of tares[7]	1	18	
Firkin of honey		10	
3 firkins of salt butter	1	4	9
1½ wey of cheese	1	4	9
1½ seam of ?peas		16	
6 cades of red herring	3	3	
1½ lb of pepper		3	
Total	**56**	**5**	**4**

It is known that the outward trip to Iceland took about 10 days. The trip to Galicia would last for anything from 4 to 14 days dependent on the weather. Margery Kempe's trip of 1417 starting at Bristol took 7 days, whilst another in May 1456 from Plymouth took 4 days. I am going to presume that a trip from the eastern coast would take around 2 weeks. Using the crew list of the *Jamys*, I am going to assume there would be 42 people on board the Glaicia crossing: 30 pilgrims, 1 master, 1 servant, 1 'deputy', 1 boatswain, 1 gunner, 1 carpenter, 1 cook, 1 soldier, 1

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[5] Halves of pigs
[6] Dried cod and ling
[7] A vegetable

merchant,[8] and 3 'men'.[9] I estimate that almost twice as many provisions will be needed for the trip to Santiago (40% increase in the number of people on the trip multiplied by a 40% increase in the time at sea).[10]   1c shows the estimated 1545 costs of the provisions of food and drink on a trip for 30 pilgrims from Southwold to Galicia.

1c: Estimation of costs for the Santiago ship

Food and Drink	2 x 1545 cost
36 barells of beer	£39 12s 8d
36 seam of wheat	£37
72 flytches of bacon	£8 10s
2 barresl of white herring	£2 14s
4,000 ship's biscuit	£4
360 loaves of bread	£1 10s
3 bushell of oatmeal	5s
One hundredweight of cod	£2 13s 4d
½ of haberdine	12s 8d
4 hundredweight of tares	£3 16s
2 firkins of honey	£1
6 firkins of butter	£2 9s 6d
3 wey of cheese	£2 9s 6d
3 seam of peas	£1 12s
12 cades of red herring	£6 6s

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[8] I am allowing for a merchant as it was likely that the pilgrims were not the only commodities on board, and a merchant may well have been needed to conduct business in various foreign ports and on arrival back in Southwold.

[9] These men would have been the other sailors needed for the vessel. Unlike the Iceland ship, it is unlikely that skilled deep-sea fishermen would be needed.

[10] This voyage does not need to provide for working fishermen in arctic weathers. Also, the pilgrims were 'the cargo', not cosseted guests, so Skilman need not provide a plentiful supply of food. I am also not allowing for fresh supplies when stopping in ports along the way, although this may be likely.

3 lb of pepper	6s
Total	**£114 8s 8d**

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