

Pilgrimage in medieval East Anglia

A regional survey of the shrines and
pilgrimages of Norfolk and Suffolk

Michael Schmoelz

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Contents

List of Appendices	6
List of Figures	6
Abstract	11
Methodology	12
Introduction	13

Part One – Case Studies

1. Walsingham	18
1.1. Historiography	18
1.2. Origins: the case against 1061	20
1.3. The Wishing Wells	23
1.4. The rise in popularity, c. 1226-1539	29
1.5. Conclusions	36
2. Bromholm	38
2.1. The arrival of the rood relic: two narratives	39
2.2. Royal patronage	43
2.3. The cellarer's account	44
2.4. The shrine in the later middle ages: scepticism and satire	48
2.5. Conclusions	52
3. Norwich Cathedral Priory	53
3.1. Herbert Losinga	53
3.2. 'A poor ragged little lad': St. William of Norwich	54
3.3. Blood and Bones: other relics at Norwich Cathedral	68
3.4. The sacrist's rolls	72
3.5. Conclusions	81

4. Bury St. Edmunds	83
4.1. Beginnings: Eadmund Rex Anglorum	83
4.2. Lives of St. Edmund	89
4.2.1. Abbo of Fleury's <i>Passio Sancti Edmundi</i>	91
4.2.2. Herman the Archdeacon's <i>De Miraculis</i>	94
4.2.3. Goscelin of St. Bertin's <i>De Miraculis</i>	97
4.2.4. Geoffrey of Wells' <i>De Infantia Sancti Eadmundi</i>	100
4.2.5. Three verse lives and a chronicle: the evidence for the cult in the later twelfth and the early thirteenth centuries	103
4.2.6. Abbot Samson and Osbert of Clare	105
4.2.7. New material: The <i>Vita et Passio cum Miraculis Sancti Edmundi</i>	108
4.2.8. 'Blyssyd Edmund, kyng martir and vyrgyne': John Lydgate's Lives of SS Edmund & Fremund	113
4.3. Beyond Bury: St. Edmund abroad	114
4.4. Conclusions	117
4.5. Robert of Bury	118
5. Ely	123
5.1. The evidence for the early cult	123
5.2. Collecting the set: The female saints of Ely	125
5.3. The Ely sacrist's rolls: plague and endurance	130
5.4. Conclusions	136

Part Two – Gazetteer

1. Suffolk	139
1.1. Ashfield cum Thorpe	139
1.2. Blythburgh	
1.3. Haughley	139
1.4. Ipswich	140
1.4.1. A damsel in distress: A sixteenth century miracle at Ipswich	143
1.5. Kersey	147

1.6.	Laxfield	148
1.7.	Long Melford	148
1.8.	Stanton	150
1.9.	Stoke-by-Clare	151
1.10.	Sudbury	152
1.11.	Woolpit	153
2.	Norfolk	158
2.1.	Bawburgh	158
2.2.	Bixley	165
2.3.	Bracondale	166
2.4.	Castle Acre	168
2.5.	Cringleford	169
2.6.	Crostwight	170
2.7.	East Dereham	172
2.8.	Elsing	178
2.9.	Foulsham	179
2.10.	Great Hautbois	179
2.11.	Great Yarmouth	181
2.12.	Holkham	187
2.13.	Hoveton	189
2.14.	King's Lynn	191
2.15.	Lakenham	194
2.16.	Long Stratton	195
2.17.	Martham	195
2.18.	Norwich, St. Stephen	197
2.19.	Reepham	200
2.20.	Thetford	201
2.21.	Thorpe Hamlet	206
2.22.	Tibenham	210
2.23.	Trimingham	212

2.24. West Acre	214
2.25. West Dereham	215
2.26. Winfarthing	216

Part Three – Non-textual evidence: patterns and mechanics

1. Pilgrim Souvenirs	220
1.1. The evidence from the continent	220
1.2. Walsingham souvenirs	221
1.3. Mechanics of production and distribution	226
1.4. Badges and ampullae from other East Anglian shrines	230
1.5. Souvenirs from Europe	232
1.6. Deposition in water: certainty or fallacy?	233
1.7. Conclusions	237
2. Rood Screens	238
2.1. Surviving material evidence	239
2.2. Trends and patterns	240
2.3. Conclusions	246
3. ‘Holy’ wells	248
Conclusion	256
Bibliography	266
Appendices	284

Appendices

1. Appendix 1: Members of the East Anglian royal kin group of the seventh century posthumously venerated as saints	284
2. Appendix 2: Royal visits to Walsingham 1216-1538	286
3. Appendix 3: St. William	288
4. Appendix 4: Saints on East Anglian rood screens	290
5. Appendix 5: Offerings received at shrines, altars, chapels etc. at Norwich Cathedral (not detailed in the text)	293
6. Appendix 6: Subsidiary altars and shrines at St. Leonard's Priory, Thorpe Hamlet, Norwich (not detailed in the text)	295
7. Appendix 7: Examples of comparative annual income in offerings to selected saints at Norwich Cathedral Priory and two of its cells	297
8. Appendix 8: Selected badges, ampullae and related items in the collections of the Norfolk Museums Service	300
9. Appendix 9: Location co-ordinates of all East Anglian shrines and supposed holy wells discussed in the text	

List of Figures

1. Findspots of Roman artefacts associated with the Roman settlement at Walsingham shown in relation to the 'Holy Wells'	25
2. Findspot containing the only archaeological evidence for Anglo-Saxon activity in the immediate vicinity of the location of the later priory	27
3. The surviving remnant of the east end of the priory church	33

4. Walsingham Priory gate house	34
5. Detail of OS map of Little Walsingham	36
6. Income in offerings of a number of shrines both within and outside of East Anglia	47
7. Two fifteenth-century depictions of the Cross of Bromholm	51
8. Locations of pilgrims who experienced miracles at the shrine of William of Norwich	58
9. Annual oblations to the shrine of William at Norwich Cathedral	61
10. Types of offerings received at the shrine of William of Norwich	63
11. Screen panel depicting the martyrdom of William of Norwich	65
12. Detail from screen in St. Peter and St. Paul's church Eye, Suffolk	66
13. Detail from a woodcut in the Nuremberg Chronicle	67
14. Oblations given at the 'Reliquary Arch' at Norwich Cathedral	72
15. Oblations given to St. Hippolyte at Norwich Catehdral	73
16. Oblations to the chapel of St. Mary at Norwich Cathedral	75
17. Oblations to the tomb of Bishop Walter Suffield at Norwich Cathedral	75
18. Oblations to the tomb of John Salmon at Norwich Cathedral	76
19. Offerings to St. Sitha at Norwich Cathedral	77
20. Offerings to St. Eloi at Norwich Cathedral	78
21. Offerings to St. Petronilla at Norwich Cathedral	79
22. Offerings to St. Appolonia at Norwich Cathedral	79
23. Offerings to St. Gatianus and John 'de Bredlyngton' at Norwich Cathedral	80
24. British Library Harley MS 2278 6r, detail	92
25. Breakdown by type of the miracles reported in Herman's <i>De Miraculis</i>	95
26. Simplified breakdown of the miracles of Herman's <i>De Miraculis</i>	96
27. Breakdown by type of the punitive miracles in the <i>De Miraculis</i>	97
28. Breakdown by type of the miracles reported in Goscelin's <i>De Miraculis</i>	99
29. Simplified breakdown of the miracles of Goscelin's <i>De Miraculis</i>	101
30. Breakdown of the new miracles included in the <i>De Miraculis Sancti Aedmundi</i>	106
31. New miracles from MS Bodley 240	109
32. New miracles from Bodley MS 240, <i>Vita et Passio</i> , curative miracles, Breakdown by type	111

33. St. Edmund's stone, Vanylven	117
34. The martyrdom of Robert of Bury	121
35. Income in offerings received at the shrine of St. Etheldreda in Ely	131
36. Offerings to the altar cross at Ely	134
37. Offerings to the font cross at Ely	135
38. Offerings to the 'Fetters' at Ely	135
39. Locations of all shrines	138
40. Locations of pilgrims who experienced cures at the shrine of St. Walstan at Bawburgh	162
41. Alms box in the church of St. Walstan, Bawburgh	164
42. Copy of boy-bishop tokens	167
43. Income in offerings to the chapel of St. Mary, Great Yarmouth	184
44. Offerings to the image of St. Nicholas, Great Yarmouth	186
45. Offerings received at the chapel of Our Lady at the Mount, King's Lynn	192
46. Red Mount Chapel, King's Lynn	192
47. Marian graffiti, Red Mount Chapel	193
48. Pilgrim badge of Richard Caister	199
49. Income from offerings to the shrine of St. Leonard at St. Leonard's Priory	208
50. Comparative offerings for the year 1472, SS Thomas of Canterbury, Hugh, Edward the Confessor and St. Leonard	208
51. Locations of medieval pilgrim badges and ampullae found in Norfolk	222
52. Pilgrim badge depicting the miracle of the 'Knight's gate'	225
53. Spherical openwork badge of the late 14 th century	225
54. Pilgrim ampulla from Attleborough, obverse	226
55. Pilgrim ampulla from Attleborough, reverse	226
56. Mould made from lithographic limestone, obverse	227
57. Mould made from lithographic limestone, reverse	227
58. Lead Ampulla with arrow motif	227
59. Badge cast from mould shown in figure 56	227
60. Scallop shell ampulla	228
61. Scallop shell ampulla	228
62. Scallop shell ampulla	228

63. Fourteenth century lead alloy Annunciation badge	229
64. Heart shaped badge with flowers issuing from the top	231
65. Detail from Bromholm pilgrim souvenir	231
66. Heart shaped badge with flowers issuing from the top	231
67. Assemblage of badges found at Bromholm Priory	232
68. Pilgrim badge from Wilsnack, Germany	234
69. Vernicle from Rome	234
70. St. Christopher with Christ child, Fritton, Norfolk	240
71. Male/ female ratio on surviving rood screens	241
72. Frequency of depiction of male and female saints on rood screens	241
73. St. Apollonia holding a pair of pincers, Barton Turf, Norfolk	243
74. Ratio of English and universal saints on East Anglian rood screens	244
75. Frequency of depiction of English and universal saints on rood screens	244
76. Ratio of East Anglian and universal saints on rood screens	245
77. Frequency of depiction of East Anglian and universal saints on rood screens	245
78. Locations of East Anglian holy wells attested from medieval or early modern sources	251
79. Locations of all supposed holy wells in East Anglia	252

Figures in Appendices:

1.1. East Anglian royal kin group venerated as saints	284
2.1. Royal visits to Walsingham	286
3.1. Locations of surviving rood screens of St. William of Norwich	288
3.2. Detailed breakdown of physical ailments healed or eased by St. William	289
4.1. Saints on East Anglian rood screens A-H	290
4.2. Saints on East Anglian rood screens, J-W	291
4.3. Saints on East Anglian rood screens, ten or more surviving depictions	292
5.1. Offerings received at the shrine of St. Catherine, Norwich Cathedral	293
5.2. Offerings received at the shrines of St. Anne and St. Nicholas	293

5.3.	Offerings received at the shrines of SS Anthony, Theobald and Leger	294
5.4.	Annual offerings to all shrines, altars etc. listed in the Norwich Cathedral rolls	294
6.1.	Offerings received at the altar of St. Anthony, St. Leonard's Priory	295
6.2.	Offerings received at the chapel of St. Michael, St. Leonard's Priory	295
6.3.	Offerings received at the image of Henry VI, St. Leonard's Priory	296
6.4.	Offerings to St. Mary, St. Leonard's Priory	296
6.5.	Combined income of all subsidiary images, altars, etc. at St. Leonard's Priory	297
7.1.	Comparative offerings to St. Mary at Norwich and Great Yarmouth	298
7.2.	Comparative offerings to St. Nicholas at Norwich and Great Yarmouth	298
7.3.	Offerings at the image of Henry VI at St. Leonard's and Great Yarmouth	299
8.1.	Limestone mould with broad arrow motif	300
8.2.	Limestone mould with 'ihs' monogram	300
8.3.	Pilgrim badge depicting an abbess	300
8.4.	Pilgrim badge depicting an abbess	300
8.5.	Crucifix badge	301
8.6.	Badge depicting a group of arrows bordered by a girdle	301
8.7.	Various badges from Canterbury	302
8.8.	Holy House badges from Walsingham	302
8.9.	Annunciation badges from Walsingham	302
8.10.	Badge of Richard Caister	303
8.11.	Badge of Richard Caister	303
8.12.	Scallop shell pilgrim token	303
8.13.	Two leaves of a triptych depicting the Visitation and the Annunciation	304

“Your owne fathers they themselves wer greatly seduced to certeyne famouse and notoriouse ymages... whom many of your parentes visitide yerely, leauinge their owne houses and familyes. To them they made vowes and pilgrimages, thinking that God would heare their prayers in that place rather than in another place. They kissed their feete deuoutly, and to theim they offred candles, and ymages of wax, rynges, beades, gold and sylver abundandtly.”¹

-Thomas Cranmer, 1548

Abstract:

This thesis seeks to give an overview of the practice and manifestations of pilgrimage in medieval East Anglia. Unlike previous works on this subject it focuses not on a specific time period or a certain shrine, but attempts to give an overview of every shrine and associated *locus* within Suffolk and Norfolk (and where appropriate also of locations just beyond these boundaries) from the Anglo-Saxon conversion period to the Reformation. Inherent in this aim is a certain degree of editorial severity to fit the bounds of the format. This thesis seeks to amalgamate approaches and sources from a variety of disciplines, chief amongst them ecclesiastical history, archaeology, art history, landscape archaeology and antiquarian history to present a narrative for each shrine as well as to attempt to identify patterns, trends and changes in devotional behaviour across the region. The thesis comprises detailed case studies of the larger shrines across the region as well as an extensive gazetteer of minor locations and secondary focal points for pilgrimage, such as wells and other landscape features.

Methodology:

The chief obstacle to the research of the medieval shrines of East Anglia is the extremely fragmentary nature of the primary source texts available. In some instances, obedientiary

¹ Cranmer, T., *A Short Introduction into Christian Religion, being a Catechism set forth by Thomas Cranmer in 1548*, (Oxford, 1829), p. 23

rolls detailing annual oblations survive in sufficient number to reconstruct the progress of a particular shrine (as is the case with the shrines that were housed at Norwich Cathedral). On other occasions hagiographic material is available (i.e. St. Edmund, St. William and St. Walstan). For a good number of the most popular shrines within the region (i.e. Walsingham, Bromholm and Ipswich) hardly any material of this kind survives and the evidence base is comprised of isolated documents and oblique references. In such instances it is necessary to supplement the evidence from a range of other disciplines. Archaeological material such as badges and ampullae and surviving pre-reformation ecclesiastical art (mostly in the form of rood screens and stained glass) are used as alternative sources of primary evidence. In the absence of both textual and archaeological evidence, antiquarian sources were utilised. In a number of instances, the antiquarian evidence preserves now lost textual or archaeological evidence and can be seen as proxy primary sources. Antiquarian evidence was also invaluable because of the scope of the works and the wealth of material to be garnered (i.e. Francis Blomefield's *Essay towards a topographical History of the County of Norfolk*, which gathers together material collected over a period of nearly forty years by Blomefield, in addition to the wealth of material he was able to utilize, which was collected by the antiquarian Tom Martin). It would have been impossible, given the constraints of time and the breadth (both geographical as well as temporal) of the present survey, to undertake the work without recourse to such secondary sources. In short the methodology used in this thesis relies on a pyramid of descending desirability and ascending availability, with primary textual sources at its head, followed by archaeological evidence, surviving ecclesiastical art, antiquarian materials and modern academic works.

Introduction

“...I have decided after long deliberation about the English people, namely that the idol temples of that race should by no means be destroyed, but only the idols in them. Take holy water and sprinkle it in these shrines, build altars and place relics in them. For if the shrines are well built, it is essential that they should be changed from the worship of devils to the service of the true God. When this people see that their shrines are not destroyed they will be able to banish error from their hearts...”²

So reads the mission statement issued by Pope Gregory the Great to Augustine, the first Bishop of the English. And it is from these earliest beginnings then that the spirit of accommodation and acceptance of the ritual habits of the pagan *Angli* enters the story of Christian England. No other devotional Christian behaviour is more bound up with real or alleged syncretism and lapses from orthodoxy than the worship of the saints and their relics. The inception of saints’ cults often occurred without the official oversight or control of the established church and often without its explicit blessings. Apart from bodily relics many cults incorporated dubious secondary objects of veneration and associated *loci* such as wells, stones and trees more reminiscent of northern European pre-Christian practices. But it is precisely this flexibility and accommodating nature that arguably led to the rise and rise of saints’ cults from the conversion period onwards and their often astonishingly long lifespans. Even more resilient than individual cults though are the devotional practices themselves. The veneration of saints and the practice of pilgrimage to their shrines was a central part of medieval Christianity in these islands from the middle of the seventh century until the cataclysm of Henry VIII’s reign in the sixteenth century. This time line could tenuously be extended backwards to the early fifth century, since Bede relates a pilgrimage undertaken by Germanus, the bishop of Auxerre, to the tomb of St. Alban to deposit there relics of “all the apostles and various martyrs”.³ The extent of the survival of shrine sites, cults and Christianity as a whole after the coming of the Angles,

² McClure, J. & Collins, R., eds., *Bede, The ecclesiastical History of the English People*, (Oxford, 2008), p. 57

³ Ibid, p. 32

Jutes and Saxons remains however a matter of debate and the conversion period can accordingly be seen as another chapter of the continuing story of Christianity in Britain or its second arrival after a period of abeyance. In the East Anglian context, it is safe to assume that any putative physical pre-Augustinian survivals were localised and of minor significance in influencing the conversions of the seventh century. It is however more likely that the memory of a *locus sanctus* and its associated cult endured. The shrine of St. Alban was destroyed during Anglo-Saxon incursions of the fifth or sixth centuries, although according to Matthew Paris the site was still held in honour as the burial place of the martyr. The physical re-building of the shrine may not have begun until 793 under King Offa of Mercia.⁴

Whatever the nature and extent of these early developments, there is no doubt that from the middle of the seventh century onwards the spread of Christianity, and with it the cults of saints attained a critical momentum. This can be described as a golden age of saint making in Britain. And East Anglia was no exception in this regard. John Blair points towards the newly christianised kingdoms' need to "acquire a Christian heritage"⁵ and Alan Thacker astutely summarizes the dilemma of a saint who had "to be at once a strongly and corporeally localized presence and a universally accessible patron to the widely dispersed clientage".⁶ Operating in tandem, these two guiding principles led to the creation of a wealth of saints and focal points for their veneration. Whereas during the late antique period most saints were drawn from the ranks of the martyrs, during the conversion period the bar of sanctity was considerably lowered and admittance to the choir of the holy dead could be gained through a reputation for sanctity and in many cases the foundation of a religious institution. This process can be demonstrated in respect to the ruling East Anglian dynasty of the second half of the seventh century. King Anna and his supposed offspring provided East Anglia with no fewer than a dozen saints during this period. Many of the familial relations here are problematic and may in fact be at least partly a fiction developed at the re-founded monastic community at Ely (where a

⁴ Page, W. ed., *A History of the County of Hertford, Volume 2*, (London, 1908), p. 483

⁵ Blair, J., *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, (Oxford, 2005), p. 141

⁶ Thacker, A., 'Loca Sanctorum: The Significance of Place in the Study of the Saints' in Thacker, A. & Sharpe, R., *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*, (Oxford, 2002), p. 2

number of these saints' bodies rested) to create the impression of a premier pilgrimage location housing the very elite of the kingdom's holy dead. But even if the exact genealogical ties are a tenth century invention, it can be assumed that some kinship existed between various members of the region's secular and ecclesiastical elite. King Anna himself and his son, Jurmin, are the earliest saints (they are also the only martyrs) in this grouping. They both fell at the Battle of Bulcamp fighting Penda of Mercia. Thereafter all the saints except three were founders or heads of monastic communities. Hereswith retired to the nunnery at Chelles following her husband's death. St. Sethryth and St. Aethelburgh both became abbesses of the monastery of Brie (St. Ercengota also followed her mother to this monastery). St. Aetheltryth founded the monastery at Ely, where SS Seaxburh, Eormenild and Waerburh succeeded her as abbesses. St. Withburh founded the monastic community at East Dereham. About St. Wentryth's life nothing is known, but since her relics were in the possession of Ely before being given to King Cnut it seems likely that a connection existed between her and others of the above mentioned saints (see appendix 1). There is then no doubt that pre-Conquest East Anglia teemed with the cults of indigenous saints and a wealth of choice of pilgrimage *loci*.⁷

The extent of the changes to devotional behaviours and attitudes towards indigenous saints wrought in the wake of the Norman Conquest are still a matter of debate, although during the past thirty years it has come to be generally accepted, that the Conquest can be seen as an accelerant to change rather than its instigator, and that far from decrying any and all indigenous saints the Normans often promoted major cults.⁸ Looking towards Bury St. Edmunds or Ely it immediately becomes apparent that major cults and cult centres were quickly adopted by both the new secular and ecclesiastical elite although it is equally apparent that the great changes brought about in the administration and organisation of both the English church as a whole and particularly, for the purposes of

⁷ It is germane to point out that, in stark contrast to the observable trends for the creation of new saints in later medieval England, the majority of saints in this group are female. See Bartlett, R., *The Hagiography of Angevin England* in Coss, P. R. & Lloyd, S. D., eds., *Thirteenth Century England V*, (Woodbridge, 1995), pp. 37-52, p. 37 for the exclusively male group of saints, whose cults were subject to hagiographical writings in later twelfth and early thirteenth century England.

⁸ See Rubenstein, J., 'Liturgy against History: The Competing visions of Lanfranc and Eadmer of Canterbury', *Speculum* 74 (1999), pp. 279-309, Ridyard, S., 'Condigna veneratio: Post-Conquest Attitudes to the Saints of Anglo-Saxon England', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 9 (1987), pp. 179-206 and Licence, T., ed., *Bury St. Edmunds and the Norman Conquest*, (Woodbridge, 2014), p. 2

this thesis, the church in East Anglia, must have had a significant impact in redirecting devotional focus to new locations and side-lining some of the old. The native church elite was rapidly replaced and the seat of the bishopric was moved from North Elmham, first to Thetford, before finally settling in its current position at Norwich under Herbert Losinga, in the late eleventh century. Anglo-Saxon landholders gave way to a new Norman elite with different tastes regarding patronage of churches and monastic institutions. In the East Anglian context there may well have been a significant contrast in the severity of the impact between the towns and the countryside. The final ossification of the parish structure did not occur until the later eleventh and the twelfth century, and parochial care in late Anglo-Saxon England may well have been rather parlous. The *parochiae* of minsters were often co-extensive with the Hundred⁹ and therefore much larger than the later parishes (in the case of Norfolk a Hundred could encompass as many as 44 individual parishes¹⁰). William of Malmesbury writes that, following the conquest, one could “see churches rise in every village, and monasteries...built after a style unknown before”.¹¹ A number of these new churches and monasteries certainly preserved the memory of pre-Conquest indigenous saints and continued their veneration, but many also became focal points for new saints and new cults arriving in the wake of the Conquest. Change in towns such as Norwich may have been of a lesser magnitude. 81 per cent of its churches are known to have existed at the time of the Conquest,¹² but even there the impact of new buildings raised on a much grander scale, such as Norwich Cathedral, undoubtedly imposed a shift in devotional focus.

This change, whether accelerated or instigated by the Norman Conquest, made itself felt in various ways. The “passion for monasticism”¹³ which arose in the twelfth century led to the establishment of hundreds of houses for both nuns and monks in a relatively short space of time. The majority of these new foundations were undoubtedly keen to establish themselves as new *loci* of pilgrimage (see for example Bromholm, West Acre, or

⁹ Morris, R., *Churches in the Landscape*, (London, 1989), p. 7

¹⁰ Figure derived from Blomefield, F., *An Essay towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk, Volumes 1-11*, (London, 1805-1810)

¹¹ Mynors, R. A. B., Thompson, R. M. & Winterbottom, M., eds., *William of Malmesbury, Gesta Regum Anglorum*, (Oxford, 1998), p. 461

¹² Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*, p. 169

¹³ Davis, R. H. C., *A History of Medieval Europe*, Third Edition, (Harlow, 2006), p. 287

Thetford). In addition to these new monastic pilgrimage centres, there seem to have arisen, less quickly and less numerously at first perhaps, a new type of shrine. An increasing number of well built, stone parish churches began to house this type of new shrine, utilising neither primary nor secondary relics at their centres, but merely images of the saints (such as the numerous Marian shrines of Suffolk, like Long Melford, Kersey, Sudbury or Ipswich). For the purposes of attempting to gather a coherent narrative of pilgrimage shrines in medieval East Anglia these are the most difficult of subjects. Unlike their monastic counterparts, no surviving financial records can be used to assess their popularity and the images themselves were almost without exception lost during the iconoclasm of Henry VIII's reign. Any surviving evidence of their former existence is of the most oblique and fragmentary kind. If pilgrimage is to be defined as the travelling to and veneration of a certain relic or image housed within an ecclesiastical building then, simply owing to the sheer weight of numbers, it seems likely that shrines of this type were the most numerous throughout later medieval East Anglia. The pilgrimages themselves, of course, bear little relation to a true *peregrinatio* across regional or even national borders; they were intensely local affairs to be discharged within a day's travel to an image of a certain reputation in a neighbouring parish. The assumption therefore must be that the true picture of pilgrimage in later medieval East Anglia has something of the iceberg about it. Only the tip, the most prominent and famed shrines within the region and the odd fortuitously preserved minor pilgrimage location, are visible, the rest is submerged and likely lost for good.

The aim of the following thesis therefore is to collect and collate what remains, and to present in one place the evidence for cults, shrines and secondary *loci* as far as space and time permits. A number of the larger case studies do not, of course, present anything near all the evidence available and are restricted to narrating the popularity of these centres as places of pilgrimage without always having recourse to their wider history. A good number of the minor sites detailed in the gazetteer do, however, as far as is possible, present the entirety of the available evidence. The hope is that in so doing, wider trends and patterns may emerge that studies of individual sites may be unable to reveal. Thus we may begin the work of creating a point of reference for anyone seeking information about this aspect of medieval devotional behaviour.

Walsingham

“And syth here our lady hath shewyd many myracle
Innumerable nowe here for to expresse
To suche as visyte thys habytacle
Ever lyke newe to them that call hir in dystresse
Foure hundredth yere & more the cronacle to witnes
Hath enure this notable pylgrymage
Where grace is dayly shewyd to men of every age.”

-Extract from the “Pynson” Ballad¹⁴

“Weep, weep O Walsingam,
Whose dayes are nightes,
Blessings turnes to blasphemies,
Holy deedes to dispites.
Sinne is where our Ladye sate,
Heaven turned to helle;
Sathan sitte where our Lord id swaye'
Walsingham, oh, farewell!”

-Extract from the “Arundel” Ballad¹⁵

¹⁴ Gillett, H. M., *Walsingham: The History of a famous shrine*, (London, 1946), p. 84

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 87

1.1. Historiography

The shrine of 'Our Lady of Walsingham', despite its seemingly remote location near the North Norfolk coast, looms large in popular perceptions of pre-reformation pilgrimages in England. One reason for this is undoubtedly its highly successful revival as a pilgrimage destination which began in the 1920s and still shows no sign of abating. The other is, of course, its pre-eminence amongst English pilgrimage shrines during the later Middle Ages, only rivaled in terms of numbers and popularity by the shrine of St. Thomas at Canterbury Cathedral. But despite the fame and attention it has received, both in the medieval period, and also in modern times, the historiography of the shrine has been beset by the repetition of received wisdom, omissions and works of dubious merit. Some aspects have been well covered. Its place in literature, culture and popular imagination has been studied in great detail and with some skill,¹⁶ but the historical particulars of pilgrimage to this pre-eminent Marian shrine, such as the numbers of pilgrims, the fluctuation of its popularity and the mechanics of pilgrimage to this remote location, have yet to undergo similar treatment. Most of the texts written on the history of Walsingham were published in the decades preceding or following its modern revival and were authored by clergy with an intimate interest in the promotion of the shrine.¹⁷ The seeming dearth of scholarly material must however not be attributed to the re-appropriation of the shrine by the Anglican, Catholic as well as Orthodox churches in England, but has far more to do with the almost complete absence¹⁸ of medieval source material with which to conduct research of any academic rigour. The notable exception in terms of scholarly writing on Walsingham's history is J. C. Dickinson's '*The Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham*',¹⁹ and even he acknowledges by way of apology for his own lack of attention to the subject of pilgrimage, "that the story of Walsingham as a pilgrimage centre cannot be written in anything more than outline...because the necessary evidence on the question has been destroyed...[and] we are driven to rely on the extensive but not very helpful material

¹⁶ see Janes, D. & Waller, G. eds., *Walsingham in Literature and Culture from the Middle Ages to Modernity*, (Farnham, 2010)

¹⁷ see Hole, D., *England's Nazareth*, (Ipswich, 1939), Goodrich, P. J., *Walsingham: Its History and Its Shrine*, (Norwich, 1937) and Gillett, *Walsingham*

¹⁸ The cartulary of Walsingham priory (British Library, Cotton MS Nero E VII) provides the one notable exception.

¹⁹ Dickinson, J. C., *The Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham*, (Cambridge, 1956)

contained in the cartulary, eked out by isolated references in a variety of other sources of varying degrees of reliability".²⁰ Dickinson's book on the history of the shrine, based on his close examination of the cartulary, is still (and unless new evidence comes to light will most likely remain) the most accurate and closely argued study.

1.2. Origins: the case against 1061

Traditionally, the foundation of this shrine is supposed to have occurred in the year 1061 after the pious widow, Richeldis de Fervaches, experienced three visions in which the Virgin Mary took her to the Holy House of the Annunciation in Nazareth and commanded her to note the exact dimensions of this edifice in order that she could set up an exact replica on her estate in Walsingham. The location of the house was chosen through a miraculous manifestation of two dry patches in a dew soaked meadow. One of the patches was duly chosen and work began. But try as they might, the workmen chosen for the task could not make any progress. The Lady Richeldis sought guidance in prayer, and the foundations were overnight lifted, "with the aid of Angels' hands"²¹ from their original spot to the 'correct' place, and by morning the Holy House stood finished. This foundation myth can still be found replicated even in comparatively recent writings on the shrine, and the official website of the modern shrine, and interpretative panels on the site, still list 1061 as the date of the foundation.²² The bare bones of this story, i.e. the foundation of a private chapel of prayer dedicated to the Virgin Mary by the widow Richeldis, stem from two late sources, a Book of Hours now in the University Library at Cambridge and the so called Pynson Ballad, both dateable to the fifteenth century. A note in this Book of Hours reads: "anno domini m. sexagesimo primo capella beate marie de Walsynham in comitatu Norff. fuit fundata et incepta"²³ and the Pynson Ballad begins:

"Of this chapell se here the fundaycon

Bylded the yere of crystes incarnacyon

A thousande complete sixty and one

²⁰ Dickinson, *Shrine of Our Lady*, p. 11

²¹ Gillett, *Walsingham*, p. 2

²² www.walsinghamanglicanarchives.org.uk/importandates.htm, accessed on 16.05.13

²³ Dickinson, *Shrine of Our Lady*, p. 4

The tyme of sent Edward Kyng of this regyon”²⁴

The more reliable, and more contemporary, cartulary evidence however suggests a foundation date in the twelfth century. Richeldis’ son Geoffrey founded the priory at Walsingham, and his foundation charter, contained in the cartulary, can be dated to 1152 x 1156. The cartulary also contains a list of priors beginning in 1153.²⁵ The foundation of the priory therefore must have occurred in or around the year 1153. It is of course possible, and indeed even likely, that the chapel erected by Richeldis preceded the priory. Richeldis herself appears in the Pipe Roll for 1130-31.²⁶ A certain William de Hocton had rendered account for ten golden marks to have the right to take her as his wife, with her land and the wardship of her son.²⁷ This leads to some unavoidable conclusions. Richeldis was clearly a widow in this year, a status she was seemingly shortly to relinquish. Given that the Pipe Roll specifically mentions the wardship for her son, he must have been under age and could therefore not have been born before around 1110. This narrows the period of Richeldis’ widowhood to somewhere between 1110 and 1131. It is in this period that the foundation date for the Holy House must surely be found. The mis-dating of the foundation to 1061 is extraordinarily pernicious, given that as early as 1886 the Reverend Morris Fuller in his book *Our Lady of Walsingham* gave the twelfth century foundation date as a seemingly established fact.²⁸ Colin Stephenson, despite being clearly aware of the evidence, seeks to convince us that Richeldis “must have been a very young girl in 1061 and quite elderly when her son Geoffrey was born”.²⁹ His explanation for her widowhood is that she was “betrothed in infancy and married at the first sign of puberty”.³⁰ But even if she was still in her late teens in 1061 she would not merely have been ‘elderly’ at the birth of Geoffrey in the 1110s, she would have been a septuagenarian stretching all bounds of probability and indeed biology (not to mention Geoffrey’s gestation period of some fifty years) to breaking point. In a paper delivered at

²⁴ Gillett, *Walsingham*, p. 82

²⁵ Dickinson, *Shrine of Our Lady*, pp. 4-5

²⁶ “Willelmus de Hoctona reddit compotum de .x. m. auri pro uxore Gaufridi de Favarc’ habere in uxorem cum terra sua et filium suum habere in custodia donec possit esse miles et postea idem filius tenere terram illam de eodem Willemo. Pipe Roll Society, *Pipe Roll 31 Henry I*, (2012), p. 74

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 5

²⁸ Fuller, M., “*Our Lady*” of Walsingham, (London, 1886), p. 13

²⁹ Stephenson, C., *Walsingham Way*, (London, 1970), p. 19

³⁰ *Ibid*

a conference in Walsingham in 2011 (to honour the supposed 950 anniversary of the shrine's inception) the Reverend Michael Rear equally seems to suggest that 1061 may be the correct date.³¹ Although his reasoning is more circumspect he cites the foundation charter of Geoffrey, but fails to acknowledge the dating evidence uncovered by Dickinson.³²

The reasons for discussing this issue at such length are twofold. Firstly, it serves to highlight the qualitatively diverse and divided historiography of the shrine and underlines the need for further research. Secondly it is self-evident that a pre-Conquest inception date would raise a number of questions as to the early history which need not be asked if we are to accept its foundation in the twelfth century. Fervaches or Fervaques is a toponym of Norman origin. The family originated from Fervaques, Calvados, and is first attested in the East Anglian context in charters of Peter de Valognes for Binham Priory dating to c. 1103-1108.³³ The Norman origin of the pilgrimage centre as it appears from the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries cannot be in doubt and while there were indeed Normans living in England prior to the Conquest, their presence in East Anglia seems to have been restricted to Suffolk (and the adjoining region of Cambridgeshire).³⁴ A shrine founded by a Norman family in England prior to the Conquest and not only surviving, but flourishing within the social tensions and upheaval that followed it would indeed be a rare case, and its original dynamics should have to be viewed in an entirely different light. The more likely possibility is of course that the Faverches settled in Walsingham after the Conquest. Domesday provides information on a number of manors in the area and their tenants-in-chief. The Faverches are not amongst them, but they may certainly have held a

³¹ R.C. National Shrine, *Walsingham, Richeldis 950: Pilgrimage and History*, (Fakenham, 2012), p.: 177-8

³² The charter itself is undated, but a confirmation of it is addressed to William, Bishop of Norwich by Roger, Earl of Clare. William did not accede to the bishopric until 1146 and Roger was styled Earl of Clare only between 1152-1156 (when he was recognized as Earl of Hertford). A pre-12th century date therefore appears impossible. See Dickinson, *Shrine of Our Lady*, p. 5

³³ Geoffrey de Fervaches attested a number of charters relating to Binham Priory, as well as a charter of Hugh de Wancy for Castle Acre, Keats-Rohan, K. S. B., *Domesday Descendants, A Prosopography of Persons Occurring in English Documents 1066-1166, II. Pipe Rolls to Cartae Baronum*, (Woodbridge, 2002), pp. 455-456

³⁴ Lewis, C, 'The French in England before the Norman Conquest', in Harper-Bill, C., ed., *Anglo-Norman Studies XVII, Proceedings of the Battle Conference 1994*, (Woodbridge, 1995), pp. 123-145, p. 135

manor of a tenant-in-chief, such as Rainald, who is mentioned as having the Lordship of two of the principal manors in Walsingham.³⁵

As Dickinson points out, the establishment of the priory can be attributed to one of two causes (or most likely a combination of both). It is possible that the chapel quickly gained local fame as a place of pilgrimage and Marian veneration and that Geoffrey de Faverches found it beneficial to hand over its running and administration to a religious community better suited to dealing with its demands.³⁶ On the other hand the twelfth century is characterised by an almost “unregulated passion for monasticism”³⁷ and as R. H. C. Davis put it: “one gets the impression that there was hardly a single lord in twelfth-century England who did not have some share in the endowment of a monastery”.³⁸ The twelfth century saw the foundation of hundreds of new monastic foundations for both men and women. The foundation of Walsingham priory may therefore not be connected to the burgeoning fame of the chapel (if indeed it was anything else than a place of private devotion by the mid-twelfth century), but may simply be a part of the general enthusiasm for the foundation of religious houses during this period.

1.3. The Wishing Wells

Another aspect of the early history of Walsingham as a site of pilgrimage and devotion has also received comparatively little attention: the so-called ‘Holy’ or ‘Wishing Wells’. To connect these to the earliest history of the site as a pilgrimage centre is in itself something of a departure from previous historiography. The first textual attestation to these wells does not occur until the fifteenth century in the form of a mention in the cartulary of an accident suffered by Thomas Gatele (a fifteenth-century sub-prior at Walsingham) who, as a boy, fell into ‘the well of blessed Mary’, was taken out as dead, but was revived by a miracle.³⁹ The wells are securely attested thereafter. But can a case be made to link them with the foundation of the chapel by Richeldis or did they indeed

³⁵ Blomefield, *An Essay towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*, 11 Volumes, (London, 1805-1810), Volume 9, p. 268

³⁶ Dickinson, *Shrine of Our Lady*, pp. 10-11

³⁷ Davis, *History of Medieval Europe*, p. 287

³⁸ *Ibid*

³⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 12-13

precede the chapel as the original focal points for devotion at this site? The bold claim made by Champion, that evidence had been produced for the ritual deposition of objects into this well that pre-dates even the Roman occupation⁴⁰ is not verified by the archaeological records available, but should not be dismissed out of hand. Archaeological evidence certainly suggests that the area around Walsingham and specifically Great Walsingham was of some significance from the pre-historic period onwards, human activity in the area is borne out by the finds evidence from the Mesolithic period. But it is the Roman finds that are of the most interest here. There can be no doubt that Walsingham was a Roman settlement of some size, for a long-term metal detecting survey has turned up thousands of finds from an area north of Great Walsingham⁴¹ including exotic and high quality pottery, suggesting the importance and prosperity of the settlement (see figure 1). Within this settlement area the site of a Roman temple has been uncovered. Over six thousand Roman coins have been found on the site, suggesting large scale ritual deposition. The presence of three figurines of Mercury may indicate that the temple was specifically dedicated to this god, but a number of other items depict different deities. The site also offers a relatively dense scatter of Iron Age objects, suggesting that the Roman Temple may have been built on an Iron Age ritual site. The leap from the geographic proximity of a Roman temple in the vicinity of the medieval pilgrimage site to suggesting a continued ritual usage and perhaps even the survival of specific physical features is of course a large and dangerous one. Without concrete evidence the argument can never be more than putative. On the other hand, as John Davies points out, the likelihood that this remote and seemingly inconsequential location should develop into an important religious site in both the pre-Christian and the Christian period independently of one another, seems to be the greater coincidence.⁴²

⁴⁰ Champion, M., 'A Walsingham Pilgrimage', *Peregrinations* 3 (2010), no pagination

⁴¹ Norfolk Heritage Explorer, <http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/record-details?TNF125>, accessed on 22.05.13

⁴² Davies, J., *The Land of Boudica, Prehistoric and Roman Norfolk*, (Oxford, 2009), p.182

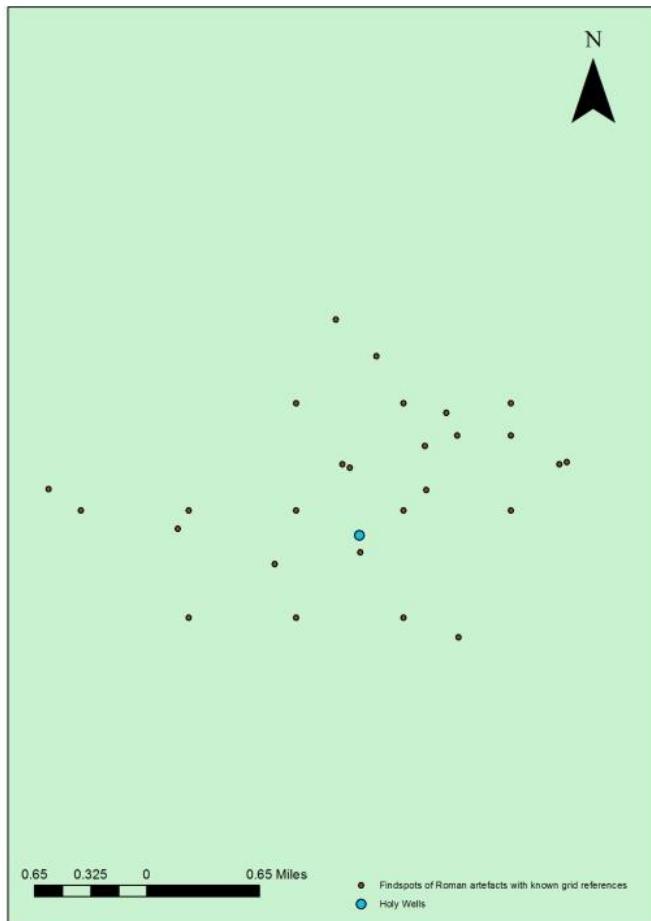


Figure 1: Findspots of Roman artefacts associated with the Roman settlement at Walsingham shown in relation to the 'Holy Wells' (marked in blue)⁴³

The ritual deposition of objects into wells during the Roman occupation in Britain is evidenced at other sites, such as the military complex of Newstead in the Scottish Borders, where a number of wells, with deliberately ritual depositions, have been recorded.⁴⁴ Rogers has also convincingly argued the importance of Roman ritual

⁴³ Map by author, data compiled from NHER records

⁴⁴ see Clarke, S., 'Probably ritual: assemblage interpretation at the Newstead military complex - towards a more holistic approach', *British Archaeological Reports*, 2001, pp. 73-83, see also Petts, D., 'Votive Deposits and Christian Practice in Late Roman Britain', in Carver, M., ed., *The Cross goes North, Processes of Conversion in Northern Europe, AD 300-1300*, (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 109-119 <http://www.biab.ac.uk/contents/22037> & S. Clarke, *Wells and Ritual Deposition at the Newstead Roman Military Complex*, Roman Limes Congress 19-22 August 2009, University of Newcastle

deposition in watery context within the Fenland area.⁴⁵ The connection between the 'Holy Wells' and the Roman temple complex at Walsingham must, until further archaeological evidence comes to light, remain doubtful, but the balance of probabilities nevertheless strongly points towards a continued ritual usage from the Iron Age until the foundation of the Norman Marian shrine. In accepting this argument, however, a number of difficult questions arise. Re-use of sites, both of a ritual nature and of places of habitation, is well attested during the transition from the Iron Age to Roman Britain, but during the period of Roman withdrawal and early Anglo-Saxon settlement the evidence for such continuity of use is much sparser and circumstantial. Indeed, archaeological evidence often points to abandonment rather than continued use or later re-use. In the case of Walsingham there is archaeological evidence pointing towards continued usage. In about 1658 an early Saxon cemetery, containing between forty to fifty cremation urns, was excavated by Sir Thomas Browne.⁴⁶ Unfortunately the exact site of this excavation is unknown, but two possible locations have been highlighted, one being in the area occupied by the earlier Roman temple and the other around the findspot of a single early Saxon cremation urn found during railway works in the nineteenth century.⁴⁷ Whatever the precise location, the sheer number of urns uncovered certainly points towards a settlement of some size and duration. Other early Anglo-Saxon finds from the area include a brooch from Lombardy as well as a Merovingian gold coin fashioned into a pendant, further strengthening the argument for a settlement of some importance.⁴⁸ The evidence for the middle Anglo-Saxon and Viking periods is somewhat harder to reconcile with the assumption of continued usage. Excavations at St. Mary's Priory have uncovered but a single grave from the middle Anglo-Saxon period (see figure 2), as well as a Viking trefoil brooch.⁴⁹ This seems a rather feeble foundation for the suggestion of continued usage, but it at least suggests that the site did not suffer complete abandonment, and the dearth of evidence may equally be ascribed to a lack of systematic archaeological investigation

⁴⁵ Rogers, A., 'Beyond the Economic in the Roman Fenland: Reconsidering Land, Water, Hoards and Religion', published in Fleming, A. & Hingley, R., eds., *Prehistoric and Roman Landscapes*, (Oxford, 2007), pp. 113-131

⁴⁶ Sayle, C., ed., *The works of Sir Thomas Browne*, Volume III, (Edinburgh, 1912), p.: 104

⁴⁷ www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/MNF2031, accessed on 06.03.14

⁴⁸ Ager, B. & Ashley, S. & Rogerson, A., 'Two Norfolk Finds of Imported Continental Brooches', *Norfolk Archaeology* XLI (1992), pp. 510-512

⁴⁹ www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/TNF125, accessed on 21.09.13

and the notoriously ephemeral nature of many of the archaeological artefacts of this period as to a declining importance of the site. The late Anglo-Saxon period is equally sparsely represented in the archaeological record (see figure 2), but the nature of the finds again hints at a settlement of some significance. The inscription '*ON WALS*' found on two late Saxon coins strongly implies the presence of a mint, a certain marker of an important settlement.

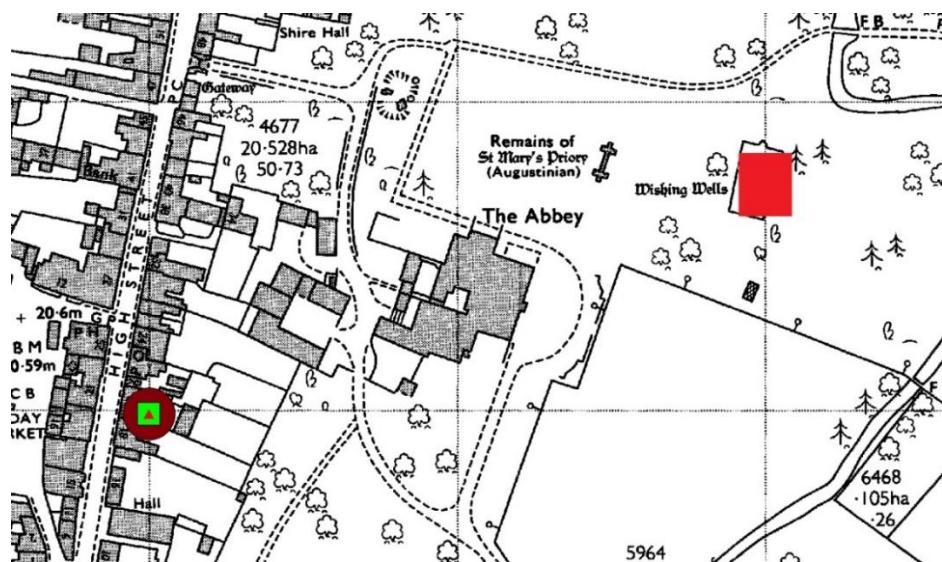


Figure 2: Findspot containing the only archaeological evidence for Anglo-Saxon activity in the immediate vicinity of the location of the later priory (early A/S: brown circle, middle A/S: green square, late A/S: red triangle. The 'Holy Wells' are highlighted in red).⁵⁰

Archaeological investigations have also tentatively identified the remains of a late Anglo-Saxon church near the medieval church of All Saints and St. Mary.⁵¹ The proof for the presence of such a church and its importance may be found in a document in the register of Binham Priory, dated to 1100x1107, but now only extant in a fourteenth century copy.

⁵⁰ Map by author, data from NHER records

⁵¹ Ibid

The witness list appended to the end of the document lists eleven priests drawn from parishes in the vicinity, such as Holkham, Wareham and Stiffkey, with each locale seemingly supplying one priest. The exception is Walsingham, where three priests are listed: Askerel, Alwold and Wuido.⁵² The simple fact of three priests apparently serving Walsingham at the same time implies a divided estate, but combined with their undoubtedly Anglo-Scandinavian names the evidence may equally point to the possible presence of an Anglo-Saxon minster there. It seems improbable that the priests are in any way connected with Richeldis' foundation, since, as demonstrated above, this probably did not exist before the year 1110. Evidence of continued use and habitation, albeit of a fragmentary and sketchy nature, can nonetheless be suspected for a good part of the period between Walsingham's days as a Roman temple until the foundation of the medieval shrine. The 'foundation myth' postulating 1061 as the inception date for the Marian shrine may therefore not simply present the desire of the later monastic community to transcend the bounds of their Norman heritage and lend antiquity and venerability to their shrine, but may indeed be rooted in historical reality. The period between 1061 and 1153 must therefore be viewed more as a nexus rather than a new beginning.

Accepting this narrative and the possibility that the 'Holy Wells' have been an integral part of this ritual landscape since Roman times, the connection between the replica of the Holy House of the Annunciation and these wells is rather more straightforward. Within the New Testament the story of the Annunciation is only relayed by Luke: "Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin...The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the Angel said to her, 'Rejoice, highly favoured one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!'"⁵³ In the apocryphal Book of James the story is told slightly differently: "And she took a pitcher, and went out to draw water, and behold, a voice said, 'Hail highly favoured one, the Lord is with you, you are blessed among women'".⁵⁴ The actual place of the Annunciation is

⁵² British Library, Cotton MS Claudius D xiii, ff. 2r/v, se also Margerum, J., *The Cartulary of Binham Priory*, (Exeter, 2016), p. 3

⁵³ Hayford, J. W., ed., *The Holy Bible (New King James Version)*, (Nashville, 1991), p. 1508

⁵⁴ Elliot, J. K., ed., *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation based on M. R. James*, (Oxford, 2005), p. 61

implied in both accounts; a dwelling in Luke's case and a well in that of James.⁵⁵ Medieval pilgrims to the Holy House in Nazareth also connected the Annunciation with a well. The Russian abbot Daniel, who undertook an extensive pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the early twelfth century reports that "at this well took place the first Annunciation of the Archangel to the Holy Mother of God".⁵⁶ The pilgrimage of Daniel is either contemporaneous or slightly precedes the foundation of the Holy House at Walsingham, providing evidence that the connection between the Annunciation with a holy well was current at this time. This of course raises the question of whether it might have been the wells which were the original focus for Marian pilgrimage and whether veneration at this site and Richeldis' Holy House merely completed the set. Any discussions on the use of landscape features such as wells and springs for ritual purposes in the pre-Conquest or even the pre-Christian period are almost always hampered by the absence of any conclusive evidence, but the relative positioning of the site of the Holy House and the wells at Walsingham (which are situated near the east end of the later priory church) does seem to imply that the wells may have been the original nucleus for this site or that they at least are contemporaneous in origin and in the early days of the shrine formed an integrated part of the sacred landscape of Mary's Annunciation. The wells, should they indeed have been the original focal point, were certainly superseded in terms of popularity very quickly by the actual Holy House and the focus of pilgrimage throughout the latter days of the shrine was certainly concentrated there.

1.4. The rise in popularity, c. 1226-1539

However the scant evidence of the very early days of the shrine is interpreted, the rise of its popularity does seem at first to have been gradual at best. A late note in the cartulary preserves the tradition that the original foundation possessed "al the grownd with inne the seyte off the seyd place, with the church off the seyde ton qwyd than was taxid cs. Be yer. And with viii acr. dim. off land with xxs. of yearly rent".⁵⁷ The property portfolio of

⁵⁵ The Protevangelium of James is one of the most influential of the apocryphal texts. Many of the later attitudes and doctrines of Mariology can be attributed to its influence. The text survives (in full or in part) in over a hundred Greek manuscripts. Its influence in the West can be seen in infancy narratives such as the gospel of Pseudo-Matthew. See Elliot, *Apocryphal New Testament*, p. 48

⁵⁶ Wilkinson, J., Hill, J. & Ryan, W. F., eds., *Jerusalem Pilgrimage 1099-1185*, (London, 1988), p. 164

⁵⁷ Dickinson, *Shrine of Our Lady*, p. 15

the priory does not seem to have grown significantly a hundred years on, when Prior William drew up a list of the house's possessions in 1250. Indeed the nearby Augustinian priories of Coxford and West Acre seem to have been in possession of much greater estates in this period.⁵⁸ According to the same account the "yeri valwe of alle this seyd fundacion, except the offeryng of the seyd chapel of our lady, passyd not x marcs".⁵⁹ Had the shrine drawn a considerable number of pilgrims and with it their offerings there can be little doubt that the priory would have invested the greater part of this income in the acquisition of property.

The turning point from mediocrity to its status as one of north-western Europe's greatest shrines came, at least partly, as a result of Henry III's intense devotion and his seeming attachment to Norfolk shrines.⁶⁰ In 1226 Henry III visited Walsingham for the first time and granted the priory the right to hold a weekly market and a two-day fair on the vigil and day of the Holy Cross.⁶¹ The initial impact of this fair seems to have been limited, possibly because Henry III also granted a fair to be held at the same time (but continuing an extra day) at Bromholm Priory,⁶² where a relic of the True Cross had been established as a focal point for pilgrims a few years earlier (see Bromholm). Much of the potential custom must surely have been diverted to Bromholm, since it would be auspicious to visit this shrine at the day of the Holy Cross (not to mention the potential for more merriment and commerce at the third day of the fair). Henry's attachment to Walsingham seems to have grown over the following years however and he returned to Walsingham in 1229, 1232, 1235, 1238, 1242, 1245, 1248 and most notably in 1251 when a fair was granted to be held at the vigil and the feast of the Nativity of St. Mary (8th of September)"and the six days following".⁶³ In terms of the promotion of their shrine this must be seen as a coup

⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ The reasons for Henry III's devotion to the shrines at Walsingham and Bromholm, and specifically the political aspects connected to the rise and fall of Hubert de Burgh inherent in that devotion, are expertly set out by Nick Vincent. See Vincent, N., 'Pilgrimages of the Angevin kings of England' in Morris, C. & Roberts, P., eds., *Pilgrimage, The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan*, (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 12-45 and Vincent, N., 'King Henry III and the Blessed Virgin Mary' in Swanson, R. N., ed., *The Church and Mary*, (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 126-46

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 17

⁶² Wormald, F., 'The Rood of Bromholm', *Journal of the Warburg Institute* I (1937), pp. 31-45, p. 38

⁶³ PRO, *Calendar of the Charter Rolls 1226-1257*, (London, 1908), p. 354

for the priory's monks. The feast of the Nativity of St. Mary was of long standing tradition; in the Western Church it had been one of the four great feasts of the Blessed Virgin at least since its energetic promotion by Pope Sergius I in the late seventh century.⁶⁴ It also occupies an auspicious position in the agricultural year: grain harvests were, and still are, generally gathered in July and August, which of course means that the vast majority of the medieval rural population could spare the time for a pilgrimage to Our Lady and attendance at the fair. Of course climactic conditions are usually also favourable at this time of the year, with roads and paths generally dry and easily passable and coastal and riverine travel at its most risk free. These factors can of course not be viewed in isolation, but must be seen as part of a wider trend in which Mary, during the course of the twelfth century began to occupy an exalted position at the head of the ranks of the saints.

Walsingham's ascendancy was certainly also helped by the continued devotion successive English kings displayed towards the shrine, most notably Henry III's son Edward I. He visited the shrine on no fewer than twelve occasions.⁶⁵ His own devotion was, according to the chronicler William Rishanger, aroused by an event in his youth when a large stone narrowly missed him as it fell from the roof during a game of chess.⁶⁶ Edward attributed his miraculous escape to the Blessed Virgin *apud Walsyngham*⁶⁷ and henceforth reserved a special affection for the shrine. It is of course extremely difficult to assess the precise impact this patronage may have had, but in the *Taxatio*⁶⁸ of Pope Nicholas IV the temporalities of the priory are assessed at just below £80,⁶⁹ a significant rise from about a hundred years earlier. The *Taxatio* also lists the income derived from offerings to the shrine ("Obvenc' p'venientes ad Capellam beate Marie Virginis 20 l."⁷⁰). So at the close of the thirteenth century the popularity of a pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady was clearly increasing, but it was still a long way from the heights it was to achieve in later centuries.

⁶⁴ Kelly, J. N. D., *Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, (Oxford, 2005), p. 83

⁶⁵ Gough, H., *Itinerary of King Edward the First throughout his Reign, A.D. 1272-1307, Exhibiting his Movements from Time to Time, so far as they are recorded*, (London, 1899), pp. 15-174

⁶⁶ Rishanger, W., Riley, H. T. ed., *Quondam monachi S. Albani, et quorundam anonymorum, chronica et annales, regnibus Henrico Tertio et Edwardo Primo*, (London, 1865), pp. 76-77

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 77

⁶⁸ Dickinson, *Shrine of Our Lady*, p. 22

⁶⁹ Page, W. ed., *A History of the County of Norfolk: Volume 2*, (London, 1906), p. 395

⁷⁰ Record Commission, *Taxatio Ecclesiastica Angliae et Walliae*, (London, 1802), p. 108

Royal patronage seems to have continued more or less unabated (see appendix 2): Edward II visited in 1315, and Edward III made numerous visits (1328, 1331, 1333, 1334, 1336, 1339 and 1343).⁷¹ During this time a number of royal grants to acquire lands in mortmain were made, further enriching the priory and increasing its fame and influence.⁷² Little can be said about the numbers and occupations of the 'ordinary' people that came to visit the shrine, but various records survive that can shed some light on how far the fame of Walsingham had spread. In 1361, the Duke of Brittany visited Walsingham (and even got £9 in recompense from the king for expenses incurred while doing so⁷³); the following year, the Duke of Anjou similarly carried out a pilgrimage to Our Lady,⁷⁴ and in 1363 the records show visits from the Count of St. Pol as well as some less eminent burghers from Compiègne and Douai.⁷⁵ Walsingham's fame had evidently also spread to Scotland, with David Bruce given safe conduct by the king to undertake a pilgrimage there in 1364. Other, more oblique sources may be used to assess the importance of the shrine at Walsingham. The following is an extract from the wardrobe accounts of Elizabeth of York from March 1502, for costs incurred in sending two men on pilgrimages to pray for the deliverance of her son, Arthur, from the illness, which was to claim his life:

"Itm...delivered to S[r] William Barton preest for thofferings of the Quene to oure lady and Saint George at Wyndesoure and the Holy Crosse there ij s. vj d. to King Henry ij s. vj d. to oure lady of Eton xx d. to the Childe of grace at Reding ij s. vj d. to oure lady of Caversham ij s. vj d. to oure lady of Cokthorp xx d. to the holy blode of Heyles xx d. to Prince Edward v s. to oure lady of Worcestre v s. to the Holy Rood at Northampton v s. to oure lady of Grace there ij s. vj d. to oure lady of Walsingham vj s. viij d. to oure lady of Sudbury ij s. vj d. to oure lady of Wolpitte xx d. to oure lady of Ippeswiche iij s. iiiij d. and to oure lady of Stokeclare xx d....

⁷¹ Dickinson, *Shrine of Our Lady*, pp. 24-25

⁷² Ibid

⁷³ *Pro duce Britanniae, super expensis. Rex, thesaurario & camerariis suis, salute. Libertate de thesauro nostro dilecto consanguineo et fideli nostro, Johanni duci Britanniae novem libras, pro expensis suis eundo peregre' versus Walsyngham, et exinde' redeundo, habendas de dono nostro, dated 3rd of March 1361*, Rymer, T., ed., *Foedera*, 12 vols, Volume 3, Part 2: 1361 – 1377, (Burlington, 2006), p. 605

⁷⁴ Dickinson, *Shrine of Our Lady*, p. 25

⁷⁵ Ibid

Itm...to the same Richard Mylner of Bynfeld for money to be offred for the Quene to our lady of Crowham ij s. vj d. To the roode of Grace in Kent xx d. to Saint Thomas of Canterbury, v s. to oure lady of the undercroft there v s. to Sainct Adrean xx d. to Saint Augustyn xx d. to oure lady of Dover xx d. to the roode of the north dore in Poules xx d. to our lady of Grace there xx d. to Saint Ignasi xx d. To Saint Dominik xx d. To Saint Petre of Melayn xij d. to Saint Fraunces xx d. to Saint Savioure ij s. vj d. to oure lady of Piewe ij s. vj d. to oure lady of Berking ij s. vj d. and to our Lady of Willesdone ij s. vj d.”⁷⁶

This account is worth quoting at some length, not simply for the sublime irony that so many saints and shrines should be invoked in aid of averting an episode in British history which of course ultimately heralded the end of such practices and led to their wholesale destruction, but also for what it may tell us about the importance of the shrine at Walsingham early in the sixteenth century.



Figure 3: The surviving remnant of the east end of the priory church⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Harris Nicholas, N., *Privy Purse Expenses of Elizabeth of York: Wardrobe accounts of Edward the Fourth*, (London, 1830), p. 3

⁷⁷ Author photograph

It may be noted that Marian shrines feature very heavily in this account as a whole; hardly surprisingly since the pilgrimages stipulated come from a mother in distress and it is therefore only to be expected that such prayers for intercession should be directed to the ultimate mother saint, who herself underwent all the sorrows connected with the suffering and death of her offspring. It is nevertheless striking that Walsingham outstrips all other shrines in terms of the oblations given. And while personal devotion and loyalty must be considered a factor, the above may nevertheless, with some obvious caveats, be used to establish a cautious hierarchy of importance and perceived efficacy.

Walsingham's gate house, completed in around 1440⁷⁸ (see figure 4), also bears witness to the continued expansion of the priory.



Figure 4: Walsingham Priory gate house⁷⁹

⁷⁸ www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/NHER56877, accessed on 24.05.13

⁷⁹ Author photograph

Despite such examples the evidence overall is of far too sketchy to allow an estimate of numbers, but the sheer geographical spread and importance of these pilgrims hints at the fact that the shrine of Our Lady was fast becoming one of the foremost focal points for Marian pilgrimage, not only in East Anglia, but across the whole of Europe. Further evidence for this can be found in the extensive rebuilding program begun in the latter part of the fourteenth century, which resulted in the magnificent new priory church (see figure 3). Equally royal patronage continued at the shrine with every subsequent monarch up to and including Henry VIII, save Richard III, making at least one pilgrimage there. This thesis is first and foremost concerned with the matter of pilgrimage and devotion to the shrines of East Anglia and it is here not necessary further to detail the subsequent history of the priory in terms of property acquisitions and internal politics. The fifteenth-century fortunes of the priory seem to have been marred by power struggles, disobedience and a large-scale breakdown in monastic discipline.⁸⁰ This dissolute state of affairs did not however negatively influence its fortunes;⁸¹ the popularity of the shrine was certainly at its zenith during this period, and at the time of the Dissolution Walsingham Priory was the second wealthiest monastery in Norfolk, surpassed only by Norwich Cathedral Priory.⁸² Despite the almost complete absence of textual sources relating to fifteenth- and sixteenth-century pilgrims at Walsingham the present village does still preserve some clues as to their numbers and habits. The Norfolk Historic Buildings Group has identified a range of properties of pre-Dissolution date that are most likely linked to the pilgrim trade. Accurate dating and chronological reconstruction of the different building phases is extremely difficult because of the extensive changes made to the buildings in the intervening period. A range of buildings clustered around the Friday Market and the High Street does however display a number of striking similarities. The earliest evidence still incorporated in today's standing elevations seems to point to a fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century origin for the buildings. The buildings today are comparatively small

⁸⁰ Page, *History of Norfolk*, pp. 394-401

⁸¹ A certain venal image of the priory and its associated pilgrimage seems to have been current amongst Norfolk Lollards at the time. Walsingham is repeatedly mentioned in the manuscript of the heresy trials held at Norwich in the years 1428-31. Defendants were accused of labelling the venerated image of Mary as variously "Mary of Falsingham" (Margery Baxter of Martham, tried in 1428-29) and the "Lady of Falsingham" (John Skylan de Bergh, poss. Bergh Apton, tried in 1430) Tanner, N. P., ed., *Heresy Trials in the Diocese of Norwich, 1428-3*, (London, 1977), pp. 47 & 148

⁸² Dickinson, *Shrine of Our Lady*, p. 22

domestic dwellings and shops, but it is clear that their original function was non-domestic, and extensive sub-division of large structures has occurred to produce the present layout. All the structures shown in figure 5 had large, unpartitioned first-floor halls very similar to many of the well-studied inns serving the pilgrim trade in Canterbury.⁸³ The first-floor halls in Walsingham, ranging in length from 49 to 66 feet would have been wholly unsuited to any domestic use, but could certainly have accommodated significant numbers of pilgrims.⁸⁴

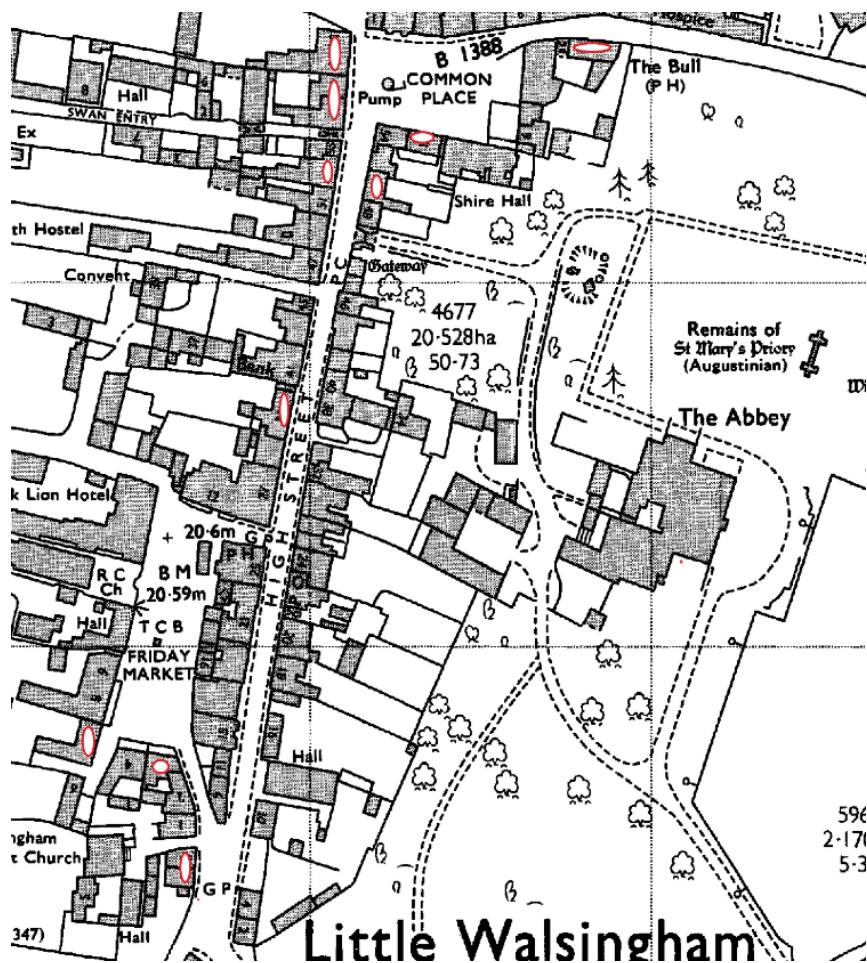


Figure 5: Detail of OS map of Little Walsingham; the locations of structures with surviving pre-dissolution evidence pointing towards their use as pilgrim hostels are marked in red⁸⁵

⁸³ Austin, R. W., *Building recording at No 2 High street, Canterbury Archaeology*, www.hillside.co.uk/arch/cheke, accessed on 15.10.13

⁸⁴ Unpublished building reports, quoted with kind permission of Norfolk Medieval Buildings Group

⁸⁵ Map by author from OS data and data from unpublished report by Norfolk Historical Buildings Group

1.5. Conclusions

The above account does not add much new information on the Marian shrine at Walsingham, but rather seeks to present a concise narrative of the known facts and the conclusions that can be drawn from them, whilst weeding out some of the more pernicious and fanciful narratives of the past century. Its use is mainly in the collation and evaluation of the existing evidence, which has not hitherto been undertaken in this format. The landscape evidence presented here is necessarily often putative and always sketchy, since the resources and time necessary for a fuller investigation were not available, but it does adhere to a more rigorous system of evaluation, rather than following the rather anachronistic approaches brought to bear on this aspect of pilgrimage to Walsingham in previous studies. Additionally, the above seeks to unite two areas of study that have both centred on Walsingham for some time without ever coming into any significant contact. The Roman and Anglo-Saxon archaeological evidence has up until now largely been viewed in isolation from the later medieval history of the Marian shrine and causal links have never been more than merely implied. In light of the evidence presented above, however, it seems clear that a fundamental re-evaluation of the genesis and early history of the shrine is necessary. The historiographical debate up to now has largely been centred on the issue of a post or pre-conquest date for the inception of the shrine without ever looking beyond 1061. Far from representing the beginnings of the shrine, the erection of the replica of the Holy House and the foundation of the priory in the Norman period must now however surely be seen as merely another more or less opportunistic take-over in a line stretching back into the Iron Age and bridging a number of cultural, ethnic and religious divide.

Bromholm

*"O crux salve preciosa
O crux salve gloriosa
Me per verba curiosa
Te laudare crux Formosa
Fac presenti carmine
Sicut tu de carne Christi
Sancta sacrafa fuisti
Ejus corpus susceptisti
Et sudore maduisti
Lota sacro sanguine
Corpus sensus mentem meam
Necnon vitam salves ream
Ut commissa mea fleam
Me signare per te queam
Contra fraudes hostium
Me defendas de peccato
Et de facto desperato
Hoste truso machinato
Reconsignas dei nato
Tuum presidium
Adoramus te Christi
Quia per crucem, etc.⁸⁶*

The priory of Bromholm was founded in or about 1113 by William de Glanville, either a nephew or great nephew of the lord of Glanville,⁸⁷ who may have entered England with William the Conqueror. The priory was at first a subordinate cell of the Cluniac house at Castle Acre, but as early as 1195 Pope Celestine relieved the priory of its subjection and it

⁸⁶ Lambeth Library, MS 545, quoted in Wormald, 'The Rood of Bromholm', p.33

⁸⁷ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk, Volume 11*, p. 21

eventually became directly answerable to Cluny.⁸⁸ William de Glanville, along with his son and successor Bartholomew, made a number of substantial endowments of lands and tithes⁸⁹, but the real upswing in the priory's fortunes did not occur until over a hundred years after its foundation with the arrival of a precious relic from the East.

2.1. The arrival of the rood relic: two narratives

The story of the arrival of the Holy Rood is given in the writings of Matthew Paris, Ralph of Coggeshall and Roger of Wendover. Matthew Paris' account in the *Chronica Majora* is, save for one minor verbal alteration, taken entirely from Wendover, but Ralph of Coggeshall's account⁹⁰ differs in some significant details. Ralph of Coggeshall's *Chronicon Anglicarum* and Roger of Wendover's *Flores historiarum* are contemporaneous, but Roger of Wendover continued work on his chronicle until about 1234, whereas Ralph of Coggeshall died in about 1226.⁹¹ The story of the Holy Rood before its arrival in England is in substance the same in both chronicles: Baldwin I of Constantinople had amongst his retinue an English priest, who became the keeper of his relics. After Baldwin's defeat at the battle of Adrianople, the priest, together with his two sons, fled to his native England, taking with him a number of precious objects. It is at this point that the two narratives begin to diverge. According to Roger of Wendover,⁹² he went first to St. Alban's where the monks accepted two fingers of St. Margaret, a silver-gilt cross and some rings (*...veniensque ad sanctum Albanum cuidam ibidem monacho quondam crucem argenteam et deauratam, cum duobus digitis de sancta Margareta et annulis aureis lapidibusque pretiosis, vendidit, quae omnia nunc in monasterio sancti Albani in magna veneratione habentur*⁹³), but seemed suspicious (*non credebatur*⁹⁴) of the relic of the Holy Cross. It seems that this pattern of rebuffs was repeated at a number of other monastic

⁸⁸ Page, W., ed., *A History of the County of Norfolk: Volume 2*, (London, 1906), pp. 359-363

⁸⁹ Ibid

⁹⁰ Stephenson, J., ed., *Ralph of Coggeshall, Chronicon anglicanum*, Rolls Series 6, (London, 1875), pp. 201-203

⁹¹ Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29040> and <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5816>, accessed on 09.05.16

⁹² Hewlett, H. G., ed., *Roger of Wendover, The flowers of history: from the year of Our Lord 1154, and the first year of Henry the Second, King of the English*, Volume 2, Rolls Series, (London, 1887), pp. 274-276

⁹³ Ibid

⁹⁴ Ibid

communities (*pluribus monasteriis*⁹⁵) until at length he gave the relic to the monks of Bromholm, who accepted it gratefully. There “the prior and brethren, rejoicing in so great a treasure, by the grace of God, who doth ever cherish honest poverty, gave credence to this chaplain, and, reverently receiving this Wood of our Lord, bore it to their church, and kept it in the most honourable place with all possible devotion”.⁹⁶ Ralph of Coggeshall’s account suggests a different narrative. There is no mention of the monks of St. Alban’s and the priest instead settled in his native county of Norfolk, near the Augustinian priory of Weybourne. He decided to tell no one about the relic except in dire necessity (*‘nisi in extremis’*⁹⁷). At length he divulged his secret to the Weybourne monks and offered the relic to them on condition that they look after his two sons. The monks of Weybourne were suspicious of the relic, and he instead offered it to Bromholm where it was accepted. Francis Wormald has suggested that Wendover “as a St. Alban’s monk and chronicler was bound to consider the relic in relation to his own monastery”.⁹⁸ While this is undeniably true, the manner of Roger of Wendover’s ‘consideration’ is somewhat curious. It casts the St. Alban monks in a distrustful light in the presence of a relic of the Holy Cross, whose provenance and miracle working capacities were ultimately proven at Bromholm, as he himself reported. If the account of the priest attempting to hawk the relic at St. Albans is indeed rooted in historical fact, than Roger of Wendover, who himself was a monk there for much of the period during which the priest might have appeared,⁹⁹ must have known some of the monks involved in the negotiations, even if he himself was not one of them. At this remove the motivations of Roger of Wendover in penning this narrative can of course not be disentangled. He might have felt duty-bound to report the facts as he knew them, even if St. Albans did not appear in a favourable light. He may equally have been motivated by private enmities (see footnote 96) and loyalties that are, since they are not made explicit, lost to the modern reader. Alternatively, and most

⁹⁵ Ibid

⁹⁶ Roger of Wendover, translated by Coulton, G. G., *Five Centuries of Religion*, 4 vols, Volume 2, (Cambridge, 1923-50), p. 90

⁹⁷ Stephenson, *Ralph of Coggeshall*, p. 202

⁹⁸ Wormald, ‘The Rood of Bromholm’, p. 36

⁹⁹ Roger of Wendover spent time away from the monastery as prior of the Leicestershire cell of St. Alban’s at Belvoir. He was deposed in about 1219 by his abbot and presumably returned to St. Alban’s thereafter, where he died in 1236. This may suggest that relations between Roger and other senior monks at St. Alban’s were not without tensions. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, www.oxforddnb.com/article29040, accessed on 22.11.13

intriguingly, he may have had some doubts as to the authenticity of the relic and chose to make the St. Albans monks the vehicle for his disquiet. His subsequent account of the spreading fame of, and the miracles worked at, Bromholm does not preclude such an interpretation; royal patronage and popular acclaim of the relic did not leave him any option to act otherwise. Coggeshall's assertion that the priest was a native of Norfolk may simply be a literary device to link him with the rather remote priory of Bromholm, but may equally be based in historical truth. His account of the circumstances in which the relic left Constantinople contains significantly more detail than that of Roger of Wendover. Much of it is historically verifiable,¹⁰⁰ and it must therefore be considered the more accurate narrative. Neither chronicler gives any indication of when exactly the relic reached Bromholm, although Wendover asserts that miracles there began to increase in 1223. Coggeshall simply notes that they did not begin until the priest was dead. Most pertinently for the present study, however, Coggeshall includes a significant detail in this section of his narrative: "*Defunctus est itaque praedictus presbyter antequam ista miracula crebescerent, et sepultus est apud canonicos de Wabruna, quibus contulerat quandam portiunculam ejusdem crucis; in quo etiam loco similiter miracula fiunt, et peregrinorum frequentia*".¹⁰¹ This remarkable assertion that a second site of pilgrimage to a relic of the Holy Cross was in existence a few miles away along the North Norfolk coast can not be further corroborated. If, as Coggeshall states, it became a place of pilgrimage and miracles were worked there, all traces of this have been lost. The cult may simply have had a brief period of interest after which it fell into abeyance.¹⁰² Interestingly Ralph of Coggeshall equally employs the *topos* of doubt in the authenticity of the relic, which in his narrative is relocated from St. Alban's to Weybourne. As will be seen below, this was not the last time such concerns were raised.

The *Flores historiarum* simply notes: "*Incepit peregrinatio ad crucem de Bromholm in eodem anno*"¹⁰³ (1223). A similar entry can be found in the Annals of Dunstable for the

¹⁰⁰ Wormald, 'The Rood of Bromholm', p. 35

¹⁰¹ Stephenson, *Ralph of Coggeshall*, p. 202

¹⁰² The priory at Weybourne was founded as a subordinate cell of the priory of West Acre and intended for a small number of canons. By the early fifteenth century only two canons remained and the house was severely impoverished. Page, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 2, pp. 404-6

¹⁰³ Luard, H. R., ed., *Flores Historiarum, Volume II, AD 1067- AD 1264*, Rolls Series (3 vols), (London, 1890), p. 179

year 1225.¹⁰⁴ Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda Sanctorum*, possibly compiled in the 1260s gives a detailed account of the *inventio* of the cross by Helena¹⁰⁵ and her gift of one part of it to her son, the emperor Constantine. This account is echoed and embellished in Wynkyn de Worde's 1516 edition of the *Nova Legenda Anglie*. It relates how Helena, on discovering the cross, promptly divided it into nine parts, according to the nine orders of angels ("Sancta vero Helena, inventa cruce nouem particulas abscidit, propter nouem ordines angelorum"¹⁰⁶) and how she fashioned a little cross out of the part most sprinkled with the blood of Jesus. This cross she gave to the emperor Constantine, her son. The cross then passed from Emperor to Emperor until the time of Baldwin, count of Flanders and Hainault and first Latin Emperor of the East. The *Nova Legenda Anglie* also gives an account of the miracle-working properties of this most holy of relics after its arrival at Bromholm: "In prefato vero monasterio virtute crucis memorante, cooperante Domino, triginta nouem mortuos vite redditos legi, decem et nouem cecos illuminatos, cum aliis nonnullis miraculis diuinitus ostensis".¹⁰⁷ It is from this account that we can deduce the enduring popularity of the Holy Rood at Bromholm as a pilgrimage venue, nearly three centuries after it first came to prominence. It is not clear in what year the relic reached the priory of Bromholm, but it must have been in the period between the flight of Hugh from Constantinople in 1205 and the year 1223, when Wendover reports that miracles began to increase there.¹⁰⁸ The day on which the cross arrived at the priory can be inferred from the Bromholm Psalter, now in the Bodleian Library. An entry for 15 March reads: "Hac die visitavit Dominus locum istum per lignum crucis quod nobis transmisit in maxima quantitate".¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ *Eodem anno multiplicata sunt miracula apud veram crucem de Bromholm, que fuerat Baldewini, imperatoris Constantinopolitani; et quam ab eo accepit quidam capellanus suus Anglicus, et eam in Angliam attulit, et loco contulit memorato*, Luard, H. R., ed., *Annales Monastici*, 5 vols, Volume III, (London, 1864-9), p. 97

¹⁰⁵ Ryan, G. & Ripperger, H., trans., eds., *The Golden Legend of Jacobus de Voragine*, (New York, 1969), pp. 269-276

¹⁰⁶ Horstmann, C. ed., *Nova legenda Anglie*, 2 vols, Volume I, (Oxford, 1901), p. 329

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁸ Hewlett, *Roger of Wendover*, p.:276

¹⁰⁹ Oxford, Bodleian Ashmole MS. 1523, quoted in Cockerell, S. C. & James, M. R., *Two East Anglian Psalters at the Bodleian Library*, Oxford, (Oxford, 1926), p. 41

2.2. Royal patronage

Unlike Walsingham, where devotion and pilgrimage to the shrine seems to have built slowly for the first century after its inception, the fame of Bromholm appears to have spread almost overnight. Yet again, as with Walsingham, Henry III was instrumental in its rise. In 1226 he granted the priory a fair on Holy Cross Day as well as the day before and after (13th to 15th of September).¹¹⁰ As was discussed in the case of Walsingham, the date of such a fair was crucial in attracting visitors and pilgrims. Following the harvest gathering in July and August the rural calendar entered a somewhat more leisurely period about this time. In addition, attendance at a fair at this time of year may have been crucial to many individuals in the lower tiers of the agrarian community to divest themselves of surplus food and livestock that could not be stored and overwintered adequately and to acquire any necessities for the coming winter months. Assuming a relatively dry summer, roads were at their most passable at this time of year, and the weather is generally mild enough to favour any necessary travel.

Despite the fact that Walsingham and Bromholm both seem to owe their fame and influence to the same generous royal progress through Norfolk by Henry III their subsequent history diverges significantly. While Walsingham continued to attract royal and aristocratic visits up to the time of the dissolution this type of pilgrimage seems to have been rather short-lived in the case of Bromholm. Henry III made another five visits following his initial pilgrimage in 1226, and his son Edward visited the priory twice, but English Royalty afterwards did not seem to return there. The only possible royal visit during the later period of the shrine's history may have occurred in 1421. The Chronicle of John Strecche gives an account of a visit by Henry V to Lynn, Walsingham and Norwich in that year, but does not specifically mention Bromholm. Henry V did, however, seem to have some affection for the shrine, granting the prior and monks four pipes of wine annually from the ports of Yarmouth and Kirkby.¹¹¹ In all previous accounts of the history of pilgrimage to the Holy Rood at Bromholm the immense popularity of the shrine is emphasised, together with the

¹¹⁰ Wormald, 'The Rood of Bromholm', p. 38

¹¹¹ The grant specified that the priory should only pay the 'king's prise' of 10s. for each pipe. PRO, *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1416-1422*, (London, 1911), p. 10. See also Steane, J., *The Archaeology of the Medieval English Monarchy*, (London, 1999), p. 190

lack of royal patronage, but serious examination of both these phenomena, if they indeed both hold true, is not attempted. The lack of royal patronage is not in doubt. The only records of lavish gifts to the priory all relate to the reign of Henry III, such as an *ex voto* model in silver of a ship being fitted out at Portsmouth, which was sent to Bromholm in 1227,¹¹² and a silver-gilt image of the king himself, which was sent there in 1234.¹¹³ But how can such a rapid drop in royal patronage be explained? From the very beginning of the shrine the authenticity of the relic seems to have been in doubt. The series of refusals received by the priest when he offered the relic to various monastic communities must surely be seen in such a light. Alternatively, it could be assumed that Coggeshall, Wendover and Paris, in choosing to chronicle these episodes, were less than sure regarding the provenance and authenticity of the relic. Henry III, more than any other medieval English monarch, was enraptured by relics associated with Christ and his Passion. His installation of a relic of the Holy Blood at Westminster in 1247 amidst much pomp and ceremony amply testifies to this devotion,¹¹⁴ but the failure of the relic to become a significant focus for devotion and pilgrimage equally testifies that such devotion to, and belief in the authenticity and efficacy of, such relics was not a universally shared attitude. Evidence for individual pilgrims to Bromholm is scanty and occasionally throws up more questions than it answers. A letter on the Close Roll of 1236 provides us with one such pilgrim, Lawrence, son of Baldric,¹¹⁵ whose wife had brought charges against three individuals at Lincoln on suspicion of his murder. The king intervened and ordered the prisoners to be granted bail, since Lawrence had apparently not been murdered, but had gone on a pilgrimage to Bromholm (“...eo quod tunc testatum fuit quod predictus Laurentius peregre prefectus fuit apud Bromholm et numquam mortuus visus fuit...”¹¹⁶). No more is recorded of either Lawrence or the people accused of his murder.

¹¹² “Mandatum est Ballivis de Portesm(mouth) quod naviculam argenteam quam frater Thomas Templar fieri fecit de diversis collectis in honorem Sanctae Crucis pro navi domini Regis ex voto et quae est in custodia cum aliis rebus in manu sua inventis deferri faciant usque Bromholm per aliquem fidelem de villa sua”, Wormald, ‘The Rood of Bromholm’, p. 38

¹¹³ Hall, D. J., *English Mediaeval Pilgrimage*, (London, 1965), p. 204

¹¹⁴ Vincent, N, *The Holy Blood: King Henry III and the Westminster Blood Relic*, (Cambridge, 2001)

¹¹⁵ *Calendar of Close Rolls, Henry 1234-1237*, (London, 1908), p. 368

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*

2.3. The cellarer's account

The enduring popularity of Bromholm as a destination for pilgrimage throughout the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries may be gauged through examination of the surviving Cellarer's Roll for 1415/16.¹¹⁷ Oblations to the Holy Rood in the year Michaelmas 1415-16 total £32 4s. 5d. This figure does not at first appear very impressive, but when compared with other shrine incomes during the same or a similar period in East Anglia and elsewhere it can be seen to represent a comparatively high level of offerings (see figure 6). The shrine of St. Hugh at Lincoln in the same year received £27 14s. 11d., while St. Cuthbert's income at Durham amounts to £24 6s. 6d. and the income to the shrine of Edward the Confessor at Westminster is £21 in 1407/8 and £25 3s. 4d. in 1422/23.¹¹⁸ Within East Anglia records of the income to the shrine of St. Mary at Walsingham are sadly lost to us, but comparisons with some other local and regional centres of pilgrimage can nevertheless be made. Income to the shrine of St. Leonard in Norwich was £10 11s. 10.5d.¹¹⁹ in 1415, and offerings to the relics at Norwich Cathedral were no more than £2 9s. 6.5d.¹²⁰ in 1417. Offerings at St. Etheldreda's shrine in Ely stood at £94 9s. 10d. for the year 1408/9 and £87 15s. 8d. in 1419/20.¹²¹ The seemingly aberrantly high figures at Ely must be seen as proof of the enormous popularity of the shrine of St. Etheldreda, rather than a waning of the popularity of the Holy Rood. The 'gold standard' in terms of shrine income is, even in this later period, still provided by the shrine of Thomas Becket at Canterbury which was recorded as £120 in 1411 and rose to £360 in the jubilee year of 1420.¹²² The Cellarer's Roll provides of course only a very brief snapshot of the state of affairs and the popularity of the pilgrimage at Bromholm, but examination of some of the other items in this account may allow speculation. Firstly, the pilgrimage does still, or indeed again, seem to be popular beyond the local or even regional level. Item 56 on the roll deals with allowances due to the Cellarer, and first among these is the sum of 17s. 4d.

¹¹⁷ Redstone, L. J., trans., ed., 'The Cellarer's Account for Bromholm Priory, Norfolk, 1415-1416', in Norfolk Record Society, *A Miscellany comprising Post-Reformation Royal Arms in Norfolk Churches, Cellarer's Roll, Bromholm Priory, 1415-1416, Lay Subsidy, 1581: Assessors' Certificates for Certain Norfolk Hundreds*, (Norwich, 1944)

¹¹⁸ Nilson, B., *Cathedral Shrines of medieval England*, (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 210-231

¹¹⁹ Norfolk Record Office, DCN 2/3/32

¹²⁰ Norfolk Record Office, DCN 1/4/54

¹²¹ Nilson, *Cathedral Shrines*, p. 216

¹²² Ibid, p. 215

as a decrease on the 39s. 9d. of foreign money and letters of change apparently received in offerings at the rood, by galley merchants, later sold in London for 22s 5d. (*Et allocantur eidem Cellerario xvijs. iiijd. de discremento xxxixs. ixd. de galeymarchauntes receptis de oblacionibus Sancte Crucis mutatis et venditis apud London' pro xxijs. vd.*¹²³). This suggests that about 6% of the shrine income was derived from either overseas pilgrims, or those returning from voyages and leaving oblations in a foreign currency. It is difficult to assess whether the shrine had enjoyed a period of enduring popularity throughout the fourteenth century and whether this account must be seen as recording the end of this period or conversely a renewed upswing in fortunes. The scattered evidence must lead us to conclude the latter. The number of monks at the priory had been falling from a high point of twenty-five in 1298 to eighteen in 1390 and fifteen in 1415,¹²⁴ suggesting a steady decline. In 1401 pope Boniface IX granted an indulgence equal to that of St. Mark in Venice to penitents who would visit the priory on Passion Sunday and the three days preceding and following, and give alms "to the conservation of the church of the Cluniac monastery of Bromholm".¹²⁵ This might lead to the conclusion that this intervention was needed to increase the popularity of the pilgrimage following a period of decline, although, as seen below, the shrine clearly always occupied a prominent place in public conscience. The surviving Cellarer's Roll gives details of building works carried out during 1415/16, all of which seem to imply maintenance and repair¹²⁶ further strengthening the argument that the additional income so generated was needed to 'conserve' the monastic and ancillary buildings. Not many hard figures can be given regarding the fortunes of the shrine and the priory throughout the remainder of the fifteenth and the early sixteenth century, save to say that the renewed increase in oblations, if it indeed was present to any significant degree, did not continue for long. By 1466 the number of monks had dropped to ten, and at the time of the suppression only

¹²³ "And there are allowed to the same Cellarer 17s. 4d. as a decrease on the 39s. 9d. received from [galley merchants] for the oblations of the Holy Rood exchanged and sold at London for 22s. 5d.", Redstone, *The Cellarer's Account*, p. 88-89

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* p.: 47

¹²⁵ Bliss, W. H. & Twemlow, J. A., eds., *Calendar of Papal Registers*, 1398-1404, (London, 1893-1960), p. 384

¹²⁶ Redstone, *Cellarer's Account*, pp. 78-79

four were left.¹²⁷ The *Valor Ecclesiasticus* gives the oblations to the Holy Cross as £5 12s. 9d. for 1535.¹²⁸

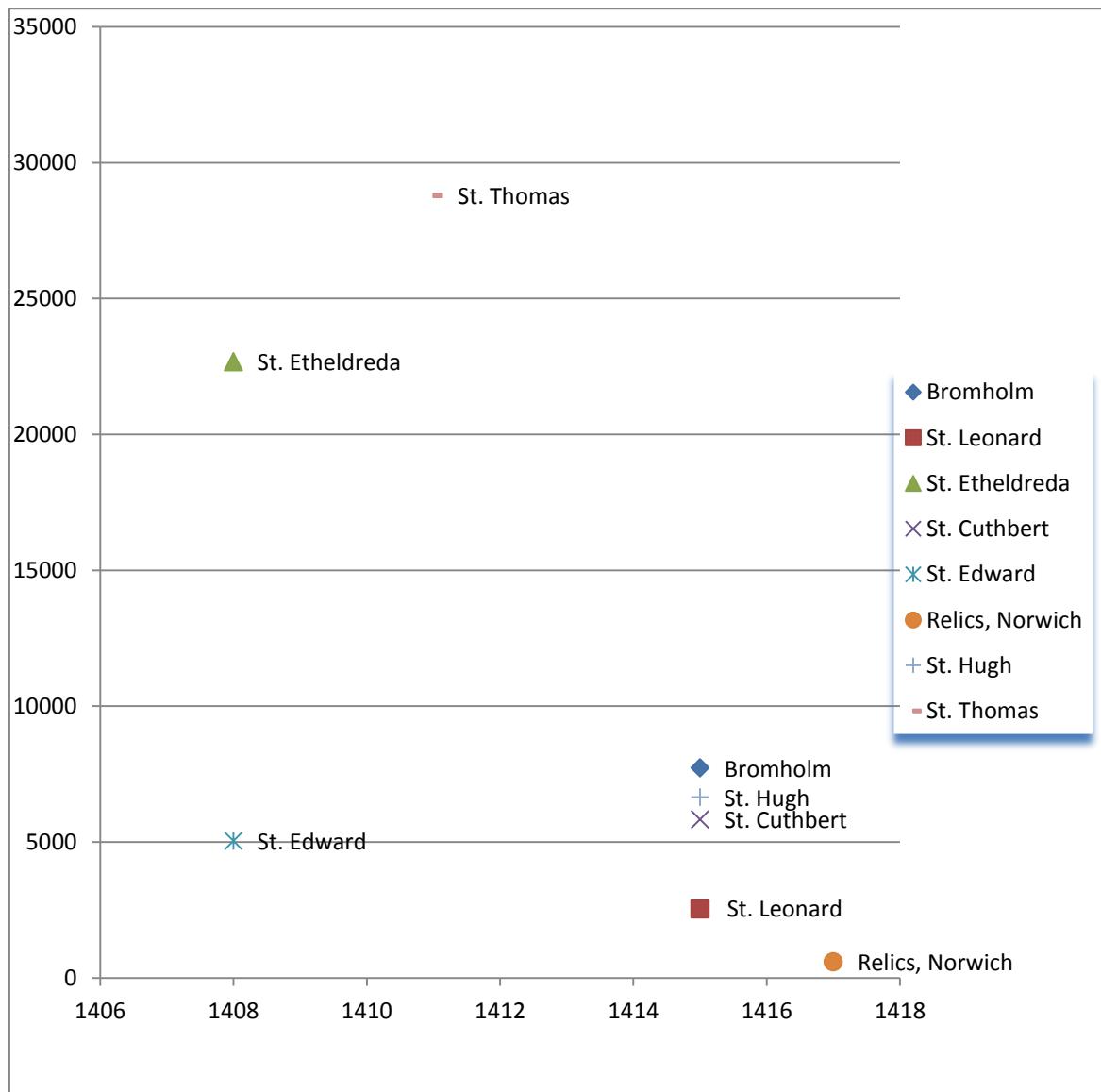


Figure 6: Income in offerings of a number of shrines both within and outside of East Anglia. The x axis gives the year and the y axis shows income in pence.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Ibid, p. 47

¹²⁸ *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, Transcript of Return 26 Hen. VIII. First Fruits Office, www.monasticmatrix.org, accessed on 05.12.13

¹²⁹ Figures derived from NRO DCN 1/4/54, DCN 2/3/32, Nison, *Cathedral Shrines*, pp. 211-31 and Redstone, *The Cellarer's Account*, p. 88

2.4. The shrine in the later middle ages: scepticism and satire

The shrine does however make a number of intriguing appearances in other sources, which may help to disentangle its later history. Avarice, in 'The Vision of Piers Plowman' promises to "wenden to Walsyngham, and my wif als, And bidde the Roode of Bromholm brynge me out of dette".¹³⁰ Much ink has been spilled in the analysis of Piers Plowman, but its relevance to this thesis is its depiction of pilgrimage. One of the central themes of the text is its exploration of pilgrimage in terms of a journey to God; pilgrimage, whether undertaken as a physical journey, or indeed a metaphorical one is central to the poem. Langland is highly critical of the corruption evident within the church and its appointed officials, and he extends this criticism to the practice of pilgrimage. Only four shrines are named within the poem: Walsingham and Bromholm in England, and Rome and Compostela on the continent. The inclusion of Bromholm in the poem is generally only used as evidence that the shrine and its pilgrimage were still sufficiently embedded within the public consciousness of later fourteenth-century England for them to be recognised by contemporary readers and used as shorthand for the folly of undertaking such a pilgrimage and the mercenary motives of the shrine custodians. To this end any number of shrines up and down the land could have been used, but nonetheless Bromholm is singled out. It is surely not therefore inconceivable that a more targeted criticism was intended by Langland; that this mention is not, as presumed, simply a convenient way of expressing a general argument, but an attack on a specific location. The *topos* of doubt had been introduced into the narrative of the shrine at Bromholm within a few years of its inception through the chronicles of Roger of Wendover and Ralph of Coggeshall and seems to have been present henceforth. It hardly seems coincidental that it is Avarice who promises to undertake this pilgrimage either; Langland's purpose in this passage seems to be a condemnation of Bromholm as a shrine of no spiritual merit, whose *raison d'être* was merely financial gain for its custodians.

Langland is not the only fourteenth-century literary giant to mention the Bromholm pilgrimage; it is also present in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. The context of its mention is

¹³⁰ Langland, W., The vision of Piers Plowman, B text, Passus V, 5.226-5.227, www.quod.lib.umich.edu, accessed on 05.12.13

equally interesting in trying to establish the shrine's reputation as perceived by both the educated elite and the lower tiers of society. The Holy Cross is mentioned in the Reeve's Tale in the most insalubrious and ribald circumstances imaginable. In brief the story runs as follows: A miller's wife, on discovering that the two college students who stayed the night at the mill to supervise the grinding of their corn had contrived to have sex with both her daughter and herself, cries out to the Holy Cross in her distress. "Help! Holy Croys of Bromholme! sche sayde, *In manus tuas, Lord, to the I calle*".¹³¹ Wormald describes this as "a passing reference to the relic...indicative of the fact that the relic was still famous enough for a general reference to it to be understood".¹³² It seems unlikely however that a man of Geoffrey Chaucer's impeccable and finely honed comedic sensibilities simply chose Bromholm because it was sufficiently well known to be understood by the contemporary readership. It seems more plausible that something about the mention of Bromholm was inherently comedic to the audience at the time, i.e. that it was exactly the sort of shrine frequented by the likes of the miller's wife, a woman, one might add, who had apparently not noticed that she climbed into an unfamiliar bed and commenced to have sexual intercourse with a stranger, believing him to be her husband. The *leitmotif* of the Reeve's Tale is of course trickery and it may be argued that Bromholm's inclusion in it is entirely germane and that the wife's distressed ejaculation is a joke within a farce on this topic.

The latter half of the fifteenth century also provides some tantalizing glimpses into the continued history of pilgrimage to Bromholm. Illustrations of the cross are found in two Books of Hours, one housed in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge, the other at Lambeth Palace Library.¹³³ The Fitzwilliam depiction is an integral part of the Book of Hours, but the Lambeth picture is drawn on a separate piece of vellum and has been inserted into the book, suggesting that it was most likely a pilgrim souvenir sold at Bromholm in the manner of badges or ampullae. The clear similarities between the two suggest that the Fitzwilliam example was a copy of a slightly different design of such a

¹³¹ Coote, L. A., ed., *Geoffrey Chaucer, The Canterbury Tales*, (Ware, 2002), p. 145

¹³² Wormald, 'The Rood of Bromholm', p. 41

¹³³ James, M. R., *A descriptive catalogue of the manuscripts in the Fitzwilliam Museum*, (Cambridge, 1895), pp. 138-140 & MS 545, f. 185r, accessed through www.archives.lambethpalacelibrary.org.uk on 21.01.14

souvenir. From these examples it is possible to infer that, despite the lack of accounts evidence, the pilgrimage to the Holy Rood must have maintained considerable popularity in the latter half of the fifteenth century (see Pilgrim Souvenirs). It also suggests that among the pilgrims were individuals of some wealth and standing, for in this period Books of Hours were of course items of considerable value and some rarity. The Fitzwilliam book is securely dateable to after 1471, as it also contains a commemoration to King Henry VI, and M.R. James suggests on stylistic grounds, and because of the inclusion of the Holy Cross of Bromholm within its pages, a Norfolk origin for the book.¹³⁴ The Lambeth Palace example seems to have been compiled over a period of time, but the part of the book containing the Bromholm pilgrim token is also certainly post 1471 as it equally contains an obit of Henry VI. The book itself belonged to the Lewkenor family of Sussex and judging from the meticulous entries of birth and deaths within its pages remained in frequent use even after the reformation. The Sussex provenance of this book raises some interesting possibilities. Firstly, it rather throws into doubt identification of Norfolk as the origin for the Fitzwilliam book on the grounds of an inclusion of the Bromholm Rood, and secondly, and more importantly, it strongly hints at the popularity of the pilgrimage to Bromholm extending far beyond the regional level even in this late period. This stands in contrast with the evidence suggesting a steady decline of the priory's fortunes throughout the fifteenth century. The evidence is far too sparse to allow a secure argument to be made, and the respective owners of those two Books of Hours may have had their very personal reasons for remaining attached to a seemingly outmoded and increasingly unfashionable pilgrimage shrine.

For the fifteenth century there is also one last piece of evidence that can be cited for the theory that Bromholm was and remained a pilgrimage destination dogged by controversy. In John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* there is reference to one Hugh Pie "chaplain of Ludney in the diocese of Norwich, [who] was likewise accused and brought before the bishop of Norwich on the fifth of July A.D. 1424, for holding the opinions following: 'That the people ought not to go on pilgrimage. Item, That the people ought not to give alms, but only unto such as beg at their doors. Item, That the image of the cross and other

¹³⁴ James, *Catalogue of manuscripts of the Fitzwilliam*, p. 138

images are not to be worshipped'; and that the said Hugh had cast the cross of Bromehold [sic] into the fire to be burned, which he took from one John Welgate of Ludney."¹³⁵

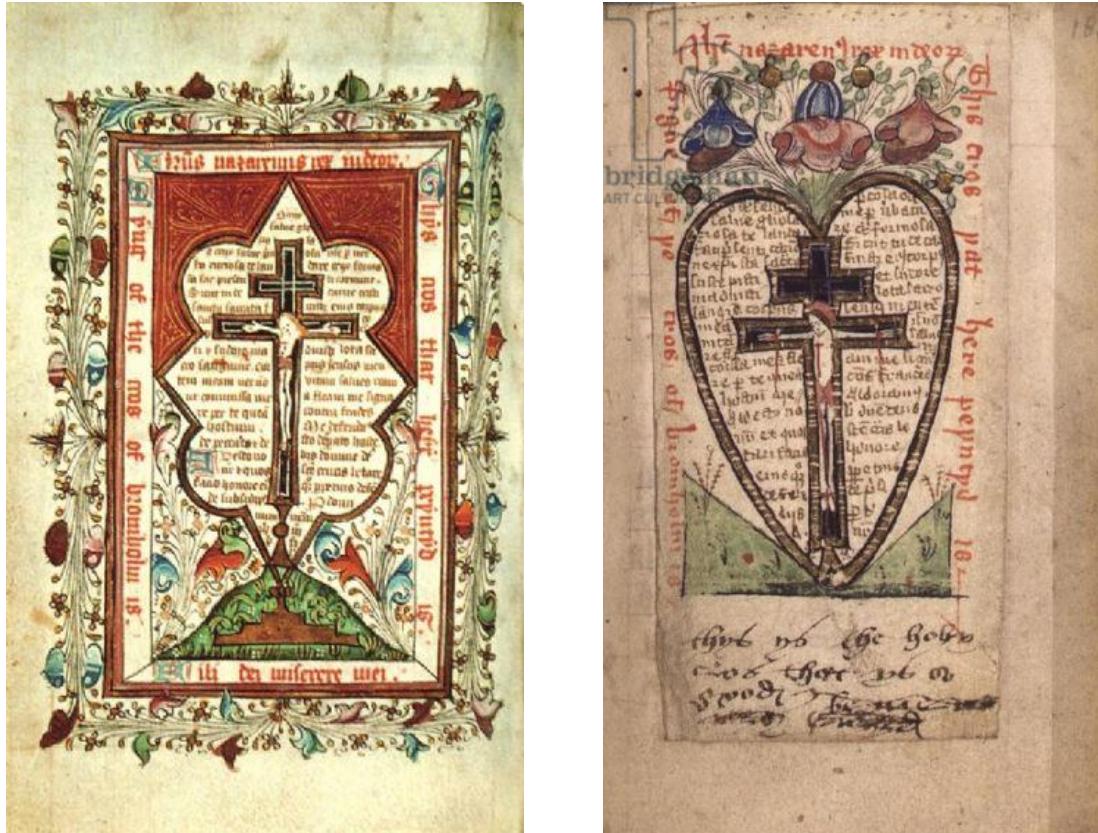


Figure 7: Two fifteenth-century depictions of the Cross of Bromholm (Fitzwilliam MS left, Lambeth Palace MS right). The central text on both examples is a version of the hymn quoted at the beginning of the chapter. The text surrounding the image in both examples reads: 'Ihesus nazarenus rex iudeo[rum]' (top), 'This cros that here peyntyd is' (right), 'Syng of the cros of Bromholm is' (left). Additionally, on the Fitzwilliam picture is written: 'Fili dei miserere mei' (bottom). On the Lambeth example an inscription in a different, and presumably later, hand reads: 'thys ys the holy cros that is or sped be me Mary Euerard'.

It seems highly unlikely that Hugh Pie was able to cast the actual cross relic into the fire, especially since there is no other reference for such an act of blasphemous impiety. It seems more reasonable to imagine that what was cast into the fire was a pilgrim token,

¹³⁵ Cattley, S. R., ed.: *The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe: A new and complete edition*, 8 vols, Volume III, (London, 1837), p. 586

possibly of the kind described above. And while Hugh Pie certainly seemed to be opposed to pilgrimage in any form, it is nevertheless interesting that once again the Holy Cross of Bromholm is specifically singled out for attention in this context.

2.5. Conclusions

In summary it seems reasonable to state that the pilgrimage to Bromholm was of significant popularity from the time of its inception in the 1220s until the time of the dissolution, with its high point in terms of pilgrimage numbers possibly occurring in the later thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The evidence from the cellarer's account, as well as archaeological evidence in the form of exceptionally early pilgrim apullae from Bromholm found in London, suggests a shrine visited by a significant number of pilgrims. This popularity was certainly expressed at a regional level, but judging from the evidence cited above, must also have had a national and even international dimension. It equally seems reasonable to conclude that despite seemingly falling numbers of pilgrims it remained firmly lodged in the collective psyche of the time, be it as an important sacred site or as a symbol for the corruption and trickery of the established church. Its popularity and ill repute might not have been mutually exclusive, but can be said to have co-existed throughout the later Middle Ages, creating a shrine continually popular, yet at the same time largely spurned by the nobility and by royalty.

Norwich Cathedral Priory

“Igitur pro redemptione vite mee meorumque omnium peccatorum absolutione apud Norwicum in honore et in nomine Sancte et individue Trinitatis ecclesiam primus edificavi, quam caput et matrem ecclesiam omnium ecclesiarum de Norffolcia constitui et consecravi.”

- Herbert Losinga¹³⁶

3.1. Herbert Losinga

The early history of Norwich Cathedral Priory is inextricably linked with that of its founder Herbert Losinga. Herbert was summoned to England by William Rufus from his mother house of Fécamp in Normandy and made abbot of Ramsey in 1087. In 1090, when the bishopric of Thetford became vacant following the death of the previous incumbent, Herbert, according to Simeon of Durham, paid William Rufus 1000 pounds for his preferment to the bishopric, as well as his father’s installation as the abbot of the New Minster at Winchester.¹³⁷ This was of course precisely the way to deal with the rapacious king, but such an act of gross and blatant simony necessarily aroused the outrage of the clergy and the laity alike. Herbert subsequently undertook a penitential journey to Rome, to seek absolution for his simoniacial deed and on his return transferred the seat of the bishopric from Thetford to Norwich “for the redemption of [his] life and for the absolution of all [his sins]”. It is of course doubtful whether anyone at the time, or since, has viewed the foundation of a great new cathedral as an act of abject penitence, rather than a highly prestigious building scheme of a power hungry bishop, but this is certainly how Herbert Losinga chose to portray it in the cathedral’s foundation charter (see above). Whatever his true motives, his foundation at Norwich was certainly a powerful symbol of the dawning of a new era in the English church, a moving away from the old minsters and

¹³⁶ Saunders, H. W., trans., *The first Register of Norwich Cathedral Priory*, (Norwich, 1939), p. 34

¹³⁷ Subsequently Hyde Abbey, Arnold, T., trans., ed., *Simeon of Durham: Opera omnia*, 2 vols, Volume 2, (London, 1882-85), p. 223

Anglo-Saxon bishoprics and towards the soaring edifices of the new Norman foundations. The same charter also attests to the sound economic footings bequeathed by Herbert, which should have put in place the institutional and financial requirements usually necessary for the development of a focal point for pilgrimage of more than strictly local or regional appeal. But from the start Norwich was at a significant disadvantage in this respect. It had neither the ancient pedigree (and with it a status of a long established sacred place in the landscape) of some of the other Norman foundations, such as Winchester, nor did it have a popular local Saint of any stature (as for example St. Cuthbert in Durham or St. Swithun in Winchester).

3.2. ‘A poor ragged little lad’: St. William of Norwich

The first attempt to fill this lacuna and to establish a cult of a local Saint was made following the murder of a local skinner’s apprentice named William in March 1144. The story of the murder, as told by the boy martyr’s hagiographer Thomas of Monmouth, is curious indeed and merits some attention. The bare bones of it are thus: a boy’s dead body was found on the 24 March by one Henry de Sprowston in Thorpe Wood. This seems to be the only incontrovertible fact, but Thomas of Monmouth relates how this child, who from his earliest infancy had shown signs of sanctity, was ingeniously abducted by the Norwich Jews to be tortured and crucified “in mockery of the Lord’s passion”.¹³⁸ After his death they conspired to dispose of the body “a long way off”,¹³⁹ to avert the suspicion of the people of Norwich. This is the first of the so-called ‘blood libel’ narratives to be recorded in medieval England. Similar narratives are known from the late antique period (the first such account is recorded by Posidonius in the second century B.C.E.¹⁴⁰), with the most famous being that of the Jews of Immestar, as recorded by Socrates Scholasticus.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ James, M. R. & Jessop. A. trans., ed., *Thomas of Monmouth: The Life and Miracles of William of Norwich*, (Cambridge, 1896), p. 21, A new translation of Thomas of Monmouth *vita et miracula* has recently become available, see Rubin, M., ed., trans., *The Life and Passion of William of Norwich*, (London, 2014)

¹³⁹ Ibid, p. 25

¹⁴⁰ Langmuir, G. I., ‘Thomas of Monmouth: Detector of Ritual Murder’, *Speculum* 59 (1984), pp. 820-846, pp. 822-3

¹⁴¹ “Soon afterwards the Jews renewed their malevolent and impious practices against the Christians...At a place named Immestar, situated between Antioch in Syria and Chalcis, the Jews...impelled by drunkenness were guilty of many absurdities...and in derision of the cross and even Christ himself...they seized a Christian boy, and having bound him to a cross, began to laugh and sneer at him. But in a little way they became so

The story of William as told by Thomas of Monmouth may well have been inspired by this ancient account,¹⁴² but why he chose to attach it to the story of the murder of a local boy is unclear.¹⁴³ As far as it is now possible to discern, the relationship between the Jews and the indigenous population was no better and no worse than in other cities in England at this time. It is only in the aftermath of the discovery of the child's body that matters became heated. James and Jessop postulated four hypotheses to explain the form of Thomas of Monmouth's account, namely that: a. this was indeed a case of ritual murder, that b. the boy had been killed by a Christian in a deliberate attempt to discredit the Jews and inflame opinion, that c. William was murdered by a person/persons unknown and the rest of the story simply invented or that d. William was intentionally or accidentally killed by a Jew and the rest of the story fabricated to explain the murder.¹⁴⁴ The first explanation seems wholly implausible, since there is not a single bit of evidence for the existence of this kind of ritual murder and the second would have required a degree of premeditation, planning and agitation, which makes it highly unlikely. The truth, as far as it can ever be found, must lie somewhere between the third and fourth hypothesis, namely that the boy's body was found and suspicion rightly fell on a local Jew or explanations were fabricated to implicate the Jews of Norwich. Considering the absence of evidence, it is futile to speculate further upon the facts that led Thomas of Monmouth to construct his account, but it is important to note that this was but the first of many more 'blood libel' narratives to arise in the coming decades and centuries. The next such account originates from Gloucester and is, as Jessop has pointed out,¹⁴⁵ apparently based on the story of William of Norwich. Another, from Bury St. Edmunds will be discussed later in this thesis. The *topos* of the ritual murder of Christian children by Jews did not only fall on fertile soil in England; there are also numerous accounts from the continent,

transported with fury, that they scourged the child until he died under their hands." de Valois, H. & Walford, E., trans., eds., *The Ecclesiastical History of Socrates*, (London, 1853), pp. 349-50

¹⁴² It occurs in Latin in the *Historia Tripartita* of Cassiodorus and may have been available to Thomas in this form. James & Jessop, *Thomas of Monmouth*, p. lxiv. Gavin Langmuir doubts this route of transmission, and instead proposes that the myth of ritual murder was invented by Thomas of Monmouth. Langmuir, G. I., *Towards a Definition of Antisemitism*, (London, 1996), p. 283

¹⁴³ See Langmuir, 'Thomas of Monmouth' for a detailed discussion on the creation of the account of the murder of William

¹⁴⁴ James & Jessop, *Thomas of Monmouth*, pp. lxxvii-lxxviii

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, p. lxxvi

beginning with two cases in 1171 in Orleans and Blois.¹⁴⁶ It is an extraordinarily pernicious narrative, and pilgrimage to one particular blood libel cult, that of *Anderl von Rinn* in the Austrian Tyrol, continues even to this day.¹⁴⁷

The cult of William of Norwich however did not immediately inspire the people of Norwich and it is fair to say that it would most likely have withered on the vine, or indeed never have developed beyond its embryonic stage, were it not for the dedicated work of Thomas of Monmouth in its promotion. Thomas was not a monk at Norwich at the time of William's murder, but entered the priory at some time between 1146 x 1150.¹⁴⁸ It took a sustained campaign by Thomas and his supporters, a change in prior and a series of translations of the martyr's body (from the monk's cemetery to the Chapter House and thence to the side of the High Altar¹⁴⁹) before the cult seems to have gained any significant popularity. It is possible to trace the popularity of William's cult through the surviving sacrist's rolls of Norwich Cathedral Priory, but the picture they reveal is far from straightforward. The obedientiary rolls only survive from the period after the great fire in the cathedral and their first mention of William is for the year 1277.¹⁵⁰ In this roll income to the shrine of William is combined with income from the High altar and it is therefore of little value in estimating pilgrim numbers. The first individual account is for 1305, when 9d. were collected at his shrine. The next mention comes in 1312, when oblations to the shrine are recorded as 11s. 10 ½ d.; the income rises to over one pound in 1314, but by 1323 has dropped to 1s. 8d.¹⁵¹ There follows a period of nearly two decades when William's income is grouped with that of SS Stephen, Hippolyte and later also Anne. He resurfaces as a separate entry in 1340; by this time income at his shrine had fallen to a paltry 5 ½ d.¹⁵² The nadir in term of offerings to his shrine came in 1363 with 2d. being recorded.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, p. lxxv & Blood Libel Database Project, <http://bloodlibelbp.com/>, accessed on 27.03.2014, for a recent treatment on William's place in the history of blood libel cults see Rubin., *William of Norwich*

¹⁴⁷ See the dedicated chat room page on <http://en.gloria.tv/?media=8877&postings>, accessed on 27.03.14

¹⁴⁸ James & Jessop, *Thomas of Monmouth*, p. x

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, p. xii

¹⁵⁰ Norfolk Record Office, DCN 1/4/3. The rolls run from Michealmas (29th of September) to Michaelmas the following year (in a small number of rolls dominical or regnal dating was used. This is indicated where relevant). Where dates are given they refer to the year in which the account was compiled, i.e. the second calendar year covered.

¹⁵¹ DCN 1/4/16 (1305), DCN 1/4/18 (1312, original missing in archive, accessed via NRO MF 1035), DCN 1/4/19 (1314), DCN 1/4/22 (1323)

¹⁵² DCN 1/4/32

During the late fourteenth century a revival of fortunes of St. William's cult occurred, with oblations reaching 11l. 16s. 6d. in 1389. There then followed another steady decline and the last account in which William's tomb is mentioned (1441) records a mere 21d.¹⁵³ As will be seen this is a far from typical income flow, when compared with evidence for other tombs, altars and chapels within Norwich Cathedral. How can this unsteady progress be explained? And what can be said of the popularity of the cult before the account evidence can be used to assess it? Judging by the extensive miracle account compiled by Thomas of Monmouth over a period of two decades, the cult of William of Norwich enjoyed significant popularity during the mid-twelfth century. Even so, the fame of the cult never spread beyond the local, or at best, regional level. Figure 8 below details the starting points of pilgrims who experienced miracles at his shrine, as recorded by Thomas of Monmouth. As can be seen the vast majority hailed from within Norfolk and are located within a day's, or at the most two day's, travel from the city of Norwich.¹⁵⁴ Numerically speaking, almost half of all the recorded miracles concerned individuals from Norwich itself. Finucane also points out that a geographic and socio-economic shift in terms of pilgrim attendance occurred during the two decades of Thomas' recording of the miracles. During the years 1151 to 1154, the majority (around two-thirds) of pilgrims (if we are to take the sample recorded by Thomas as representative) hailed from Norwich or adjacent villages. During the period 1154 to 1172 this figure fell to around one-third for 'locals' against two-thirds who originated from locations increasingly distant from Norwich.¹⁵⁵

Finucane also notes a "concomitant shift in...social classes, from urban workers to rural peasantry, from shoemakers to shepherds".¹⁵⁶ The sample of 116 pilgrims who reported miracles is of course relatively small (and possibly biased in ways that are difficult to interpret without knowledge of Thomas of Monmouth's specific selective criteria) to make definitive statements, but the shift is so pronounced, that there is little doubt that it

¹⁵³ DCN 1/4/33

¹⁵⁴ It must be borne in mind that this assessment is guided by the miracles (and pilgrims) chosen by Thomas of Monmouth for inclusion in his work, which may be selective in ways impossible to uncover. A compromise between the needs and wishes of the clergy promoting the shrine, the populace venerating it, and prevalent patterns of devotion and 'saint'-making' at the time of inception may all combine to produce a selective and somewhat distorted narrative. See Vauchez, A., Birrell, J., trans., *Sainthood in the later Middle Ages*, (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 157-8

¹⁵⁵ Finucane, R. C., *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England*, (London, 1977), pp. 161-162

¹⁵⁶ Ibid

represents a real change in how the efficacy of a pilgrimage to William's shrine was viewed in the surrounding areas.

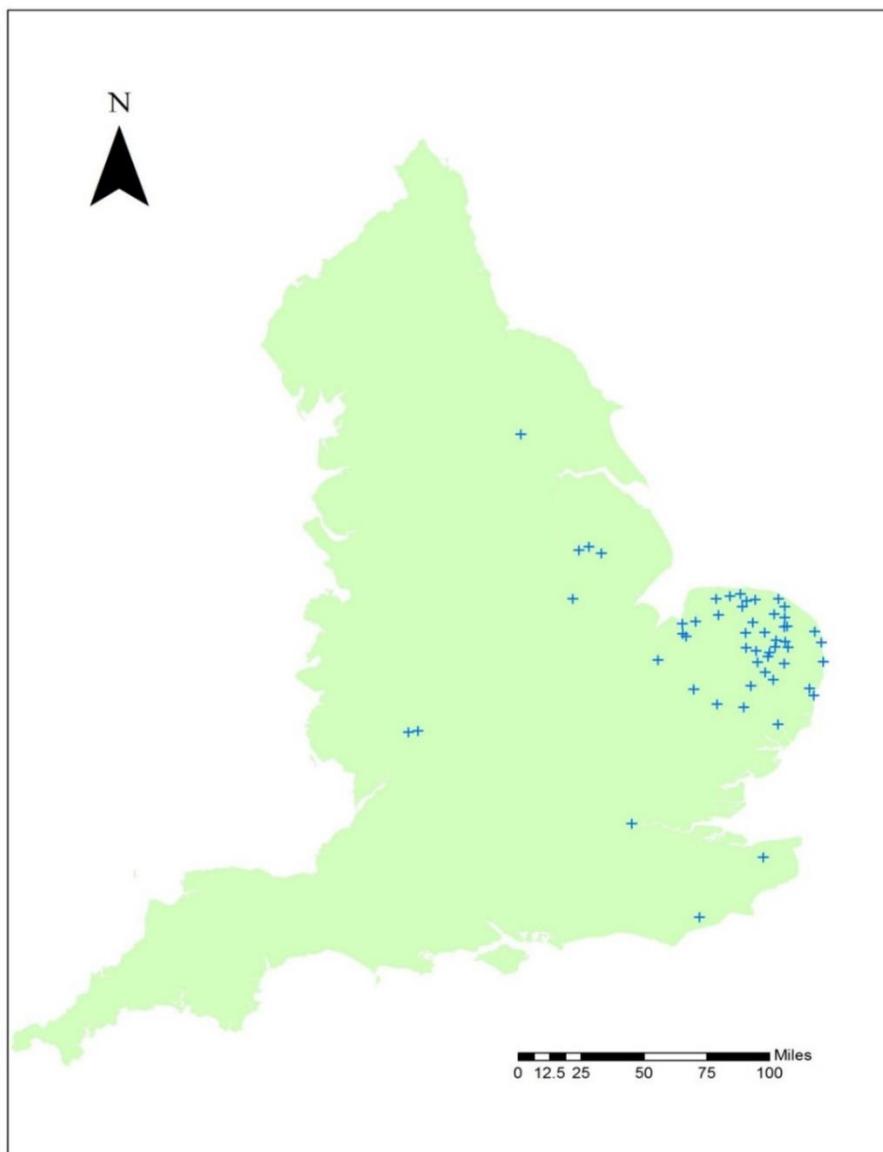


Figure 8: Locations of pilgrims who experienced miracles at the shrine of William of Norwich, or reported miracles attributed to him.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ Map by author, data derived from locations of pilgrims as recorded by Thomas of Monmouth, James & Jessop, *Thomas of Monmouth*, pp. 1-294

Finucane rightly eschews the explanation that the fame of the cult spread over the years to draw in pilgrims from further afield, as this neither allows for the decrease in Norwich pilgrims, nor for the decrease in miracles reported (from one every ten days in 1150-51 to 2-3 per year for the rest of the period covered by Thomas' miracle collection¹⁵⁸). His suggestion that the cult had simply lost its novelty and therefore did not excite the citizenry of Norwich enough to work miracles for them seems to be by far the more likely explanation.¹⁵⁹ It is tempting to build an argument of the continued decline of an initially locally and then regionally popular cult, which subsequently begins to fade until its faint trace can be picked up in the sacrist's rolls at the end of the thirteenth century and beyond. This does not however explain the irregular nature of the offerings evidenced in the rolls, nor does it account for the fact that the cult was still receiving offerings of some sort and therefore pilgrim traffic more than a hundred years after the start of a seemingly precipitous decline. The answer may, at least partially, be found in a second locus of pilgrimage to the boy-martyr William. During the episcopate of Bishop William Turbe (1145-74), a chapel was erected and consecrated on Mousehold Heath on the spot where William's body had been found.¹⁶⁰ The consecration of this chapel, as Thomas himself reports, occurred in the year 1168 and was the setting of the penultimate miracle recorded in his collection. Thomas of Monmouth gives no indication of the popularity of this chapel, save the mention that the pilgrims in the miracle arrived there "after visiting the holy places of the city",¹⁶¹ but it is of course possible, indeed likely, that this chapel, as a novel place of pilgrimage, renewed interest in the waning cult. And while it is impossible to estimate its relative popularity, its longevity is not in doubt, since the last recorded offering to the chapel was recorded as late as 1506.¹⁶² Very little can be said about the fortunes of the cult of William of Norwich for the period between the last miracle recorded by Thomas of Monmouth in 1172 and its mention in the sacrist's rolls in 1277; it seems reasonable to assume that a significant decline in terms of popularity occurred, albeit tempered by the establishment of the aforementioned chapel and possible

¹⁵⁸ Ibid

¹⁵⁹ Ibid

¹⁶⁰ Page, W., ed., *A History of Norfolk, Volume II*, VCH, (London, 1906), p. 224

¹⁶¹ James & Jessop, *Thomas of Monmouth*, p. 279

¹⁶² Harper-Bill, C., 'The Medieval Church and the wider World', in Atherton, I. et al eds., *Norwich Cathedral: Church, City and Diocese, 1096-1996*, (London, 1996), p. 304

intermittent campaigns of restoration and beautification of his shrine in Norwich Cathedral underpinned by the desire of the Norwich monks to continue in their promotion of a local saint to bolster both their prestige and income. For the fourteenth century the shrines' fortunes can be mapped relatively closely with the aid of the above mentioned obedientiary rolls. Figure 9 details the income in offerings for the years when the shrine is listed individually instead of as part of a group. The cult, at least in the context of the cathedral shrine, seems to have been all but forgotten by the early fourteenth century, as evidenced not only by the almost total lack of offerings, but also by the extensive expenditure in aid of renovating the shrine. In 1305, 6s 8d. was spent on 140 leaves of gold and 11d. on 150 leaves of silver, as well as 3s. for white lead, vermillion, yellow arsenic and oil for painting, all for the beautification of the shrine. Additionally Simon the painter and his boy were paid 25s. 6d. for nine weeks labour.¹⁶³ As John Shinners points out, such extensive works could be indicative of the advanced state of neglect into which the shrine had fallen,¹⁶⁴ but it is surely equally indicative of a desire by the monks to attempt to revive the fortunes of the cult. In any case the renovation seems to have met with some success, since the shrine income had risen sixteen fold seven years later. This revival, if such a term may be employed in this context, was short-lived and by the mid fourteenth century the shrine was once again all but forgotten. The oblations rose again precipitously in the late fourteenth century. The reason for this upswing appears to have been the establishment of the guild of 'peltiers' (furriers) in Norwich in 1376, dedicated to "thre persones o god in trinite...our lauedy seynte marie...seynt William ye holy Innocent and digne marter, and alle halewyn"¹⁶⁵ (The Holy Trinity, St. Mary, St. William and All Saints).

¹⁶³ Page, *History of Norfolk*, p. 322

¹⁶⁴ Shinners, J. R., 'The Veneration of Saints at Norwich Cathedral in the Fourteenth Century', *Norfolk Archaeology* XL, (1988), pp. 133-44, p. 135

¹⁶⁵ Smith, T., ed., *English Gilds: The Original Ordinances of more than one hundred Early English Gilds*, (London, 1870), p. 30

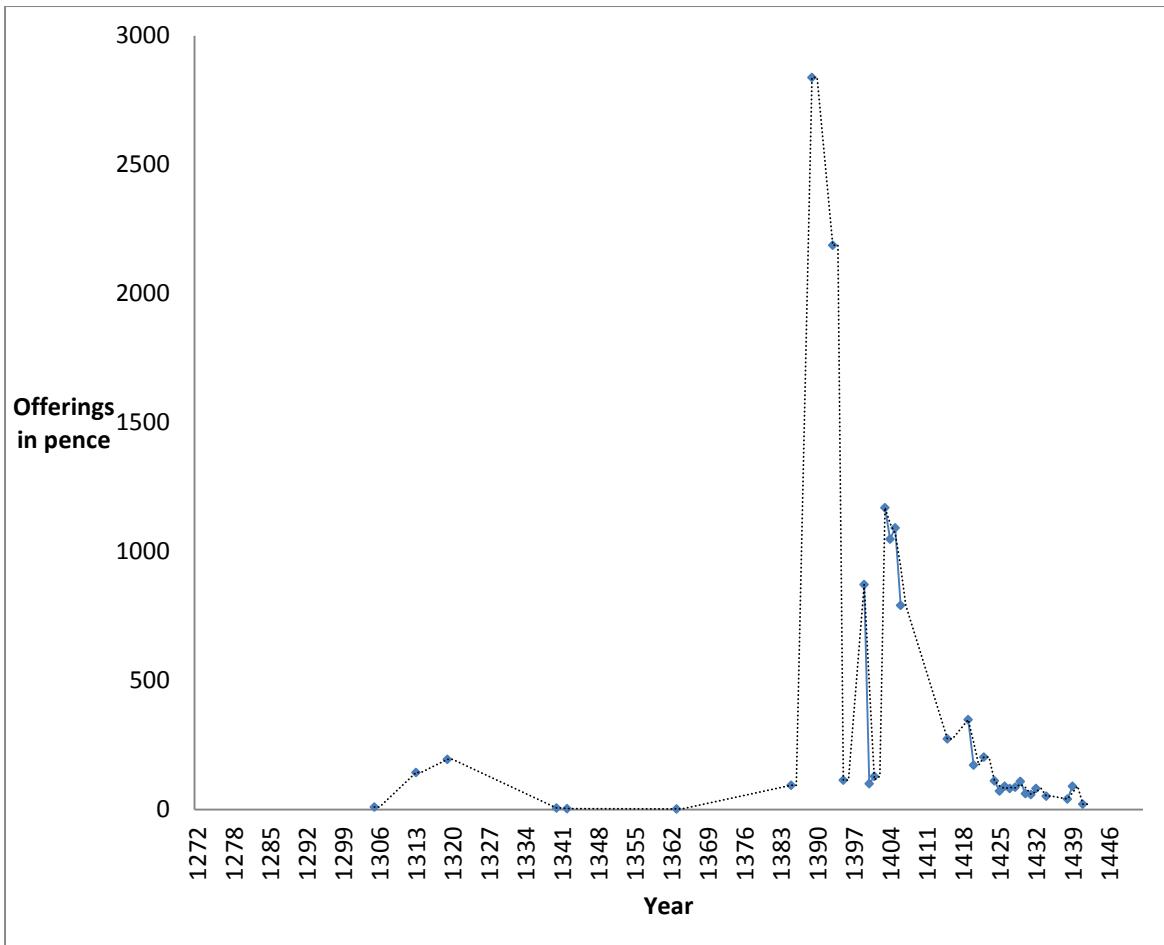


Figure 9: Annual oblations to the shrine of William at Norwich Cathedral as recorded in the sacrist's rolls.¹⁶⁶

The constitutions of this guild stipulate that annually, namely during mass on the Sunday after the feast of SS. Peter and Paul (29 June), all members should offer "to floured candelys"¹⁶⁷ and "an halpeny"¹⁶⁸ to St. William or, should they be absent without good reason, "thre pound of wax".¹⁶⁹ Various other infractions of the constitutions also incur wax fines payable to the 'light of St. William' and ranging between one and three pounds of wax. The furriers' adoption of St. William was of course apt, since he was a skinner's

¹⁶⁶ Graph by author, income figures from NRO DCN 1/4/16, 19, 33-35, 37, 38, 40, 41, 43-49, 51, 55-74, 76, 78, 80

¹⁶⁷ Smith, *English Gilds*, p. 31

¹⁶⁸ Ibid

¹⁶⁹ Ibid

apprentice and they felt drawn to him in all likelihood by the similarities in their professions. This was not the only such guild in honour of William in Norfolk. In 1383 a fraternity of young scholars was instituted in King's Lynn, dedicated to "ye worship of ihesu crist, and of his modyr seynt marye, and of ye holy martir seynt Wiliam".¹⁷⁰ Judging from the oblations collected at Norwich after this adoption it has to be assumed that the members donated rather more than the obligatory halfpenny to the shrine and also that there may need to be a general re-evaluation regarding the efficacy of the shrine within the wider urban, or indeed regional, community. This newfound fame within the wider community does appear to have been rather short-lived, as by the early fifteenth century the oblations to his shrine have once again declined to an income more in line with one that could be expected from that generated by a 'members only club' in the form of the guild of furriers.

The above account attempts to create a reasonably coherent narrative of the cult of William constructed from the available primary source evidence. It points towards a cult with no real groundswell of support, that nearly did not survive beyond its embryonic stages and only attained its limited, brief and geographically confined popularity through the diligent work of Thomas of Monmouth and doubtless many other members of the monastic community at Norwich, keen to propagate the fame of a local martyr saint. Its subsequent history appears to be one of continued, and at times precipitous, decline; a long drawn out vanishing that seems to have been complete several decades before the Dissolution. A closer examination of what one might term suggestive evidence within the miracle collection of Thomas of Monmouth, the chronology of the waxing and waning of this cult and the later iconography of William in East Anglia and beyond does however raise enough doubts to necessitate a refinement of this narrative. Thomas of Monmouth was a diligent recorder of details where William's miracles were concerned. As mentioned above in almost all instances the pilgrim's place of origin is recorded as well as the nature of the miracle wrought, and (in most cases concerned with the healing of physical ailments) the nature of the complaint.¹⁷¹ Additionally however, for 49 per cent of all

¹⁷⁰ Ibid

¹⁷¹ See Appendix 3

recorded miracles, Thomas also specifies the type of offering given by the pilgrims (see figure 10).

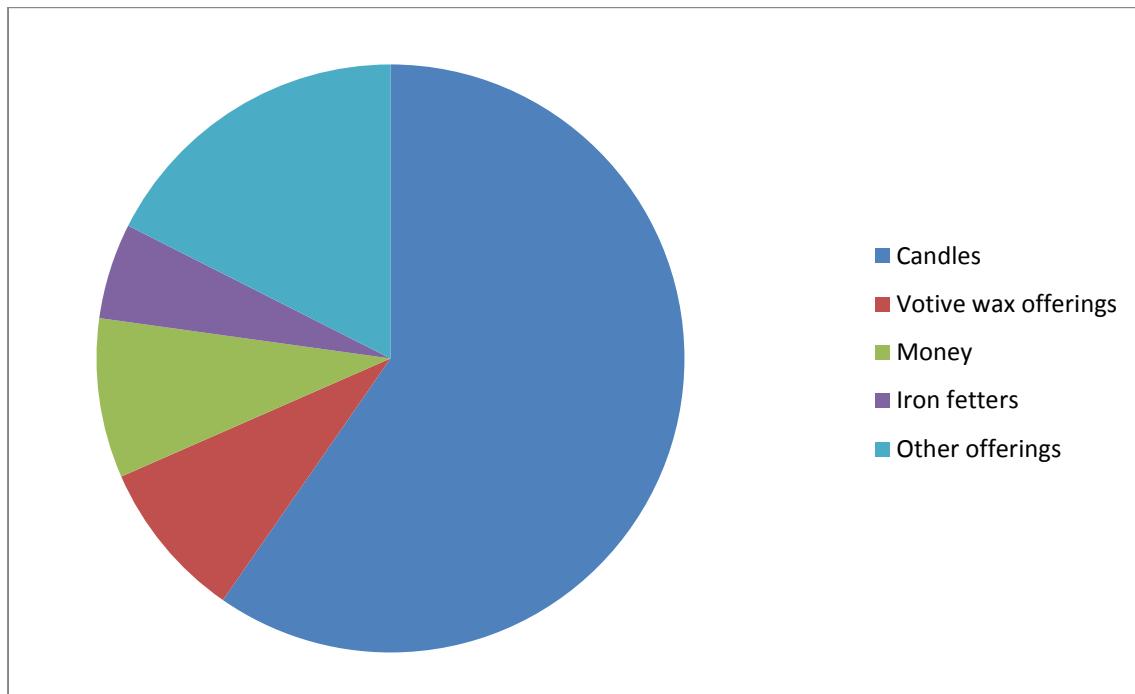


Figure 10: Types of offerings received at the shrine of William of Norwich, as recorded by Thomas of Monmouth (sample size: 57)¹⁷²

Gifts of candles and votive wax objects account for 68 per cent of the offerings recorded, while monetary offerings account for only 9 per cent. This leads to a point hitherto overlooked: that, at least during the time covered by the miracle collection, wax was the 'standard' gift offered at the shrine of William.¹⁷³ Judging by the regulations of the guild of furriers quoted above, wax and candles still seem to be retaining this dominance in terms of offerings to William in the late fourteenth century. The giving of candles and votive wax objects was of course a universal practice amongst medieval pilgrims, but the singular importance of candles in connection with William's cult is worthy of mention. It seems to be a feature deliberately engineered by Thomas, for he is at great pains to stress William's fondness for candles (on account of his birthday, which occurred at Candlemas)

¹⁷² James & Jessop, *Thomas of Monmouth*

¹⁷³ This practice was by no means unique to the shrine of St. William, wax tapers or candles were a standard offering at shrines throughout England and Europe and were a source of secondary revenue for the custodians of shrines. The feretarian accounts of Ely record wax sales to visiting pilgrims throughout the fifteenth century. Nilson, *Cathedral Shrines*, pp. 105 & 217

in his narrative of William's life.¹⁷⁴ On this basis it seems likely then, that throughout the duration of the cult at Norwich candles and wax formed the majority of the offerings. The evidence derived from the sacrist's accounts may therefore not represent the true extent of the decline of the cult or indeed the popularity of pilgrimage to William. For the most part, the monetary shrine income is so low that the absence of a relatively small number of pilgrims giving monetary offerings, or indeed their presence, could significantly distort the figures. It is equally necessary to note, that despite the low income, William's shrine is mentioned in the entirety of the period covered by the surviving sacrist's rolls. It was not the policy of the priory monks indefinitely to support and record failing shrines, as is testified by the two other attempts to promote local saints (the two bishops Walter Suffield and John Salmon, see figures 17 and 18), whose shrines went unrecorded once it seemed clear that the establishment of a cult had failed and interest in the shrines had waned to a point of non-existence.¹⁷⁵ The simple fact of the on-going recording of the shrine therefore points towards continued interest in the cult. Further evidence that his cult is still of interest and retained regional popularity is to be found in the surviving rood screen depictions of William (see appendix 3). He is to be found on six screens in Norfolk and Suffolk, all dating to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The most complete and revealing depiction is to be found in Loddon Church (figure 11). This panel was almost certainly inspired by Thomas of Monmouth's account of his martyrdom, for it closely echoes his description: "...there instead of a cross a post was set up between two other posts, and a beam stretched across...And as we afterwards discovered...the right hand and foot had been tightly bound and fastened with cords, but the left hand and foot were pierced with two nails...after all these many and great tortures, they inflicted a frightful wound in his left side".¹⁷⁶ As can be seen, the panel accords with the description in almost

¹⁷⁴ *Natus est autem die purificationis dei genitricis et virginis Marie, die scilicet candelarum: et fortassis ut per hoc ipsum denotetur quoniam multe puritatis et sanctitatis puer foret, atque candelas et candelarum luminaria plurimum diligenter, James & Jessop, *Thomas of Monmouth*, p. 12*

¹⁷⁵ 'Bishop-saints' were both popular and numerous in north-western Europe between the late twelfth and the mid-fifteenth century. Eight English bishops were canonized in this period, a further five underwent an unsuccessful canonization process, and four (among them Walter Suffield and John Salmon) had a cultus associated with them. See Vauchez, *Sainthood*, pp. 168-9

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 22

every detail, apart from the fact that the screen painter chose to show the right hand with a nail instead of the left.

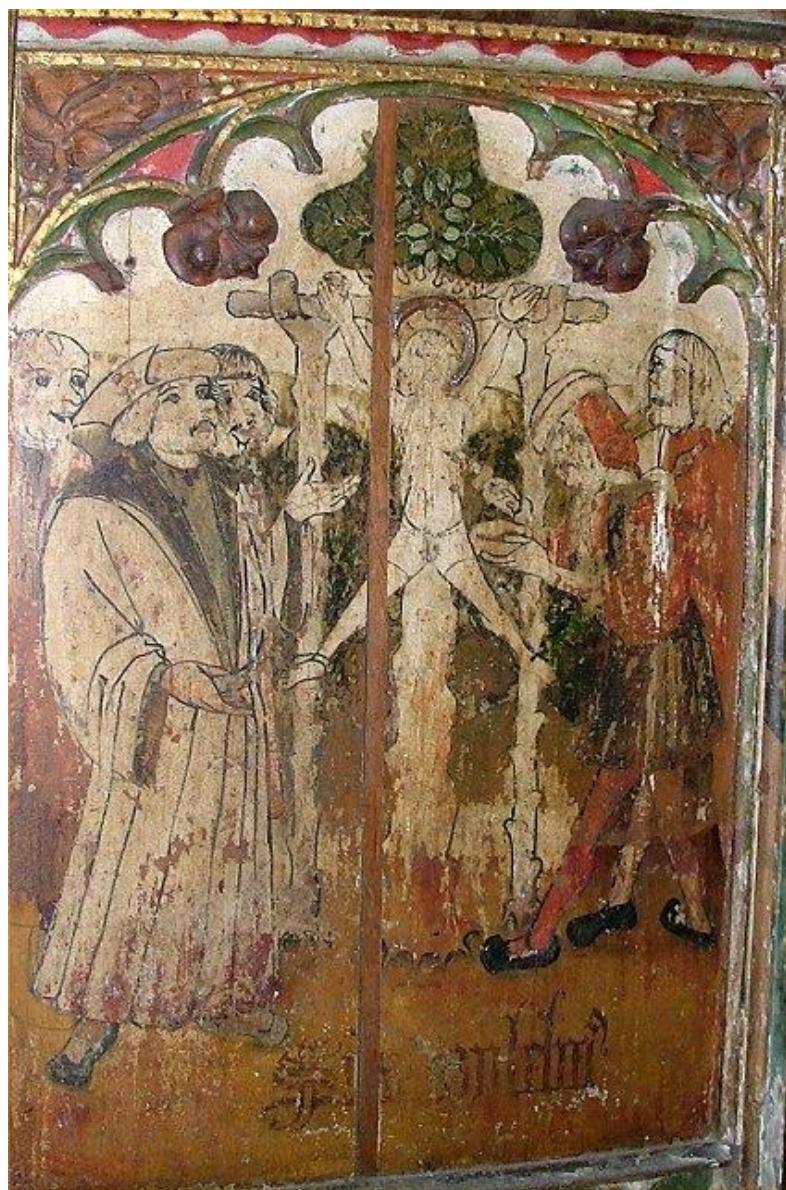


Figure 11: Screen panel depicting the martyrdom of William of Norwich from Holy Trinity Church Loddon, Norfolk¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁷ Picture used with the kind permission of Simon Knott, www.norfolkchurches.co.uk

The screen at Eye in Suffolk (figure 12), which at its earliest was painted in the late fifteenth century, but more likely is of a c.1500 date also depicts William, but this time holding three nails (the more common iconography).



Figure 12: Detail from the screen in St. Peter and St. Paul's Church Eye, Suffolk¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸ Ibid

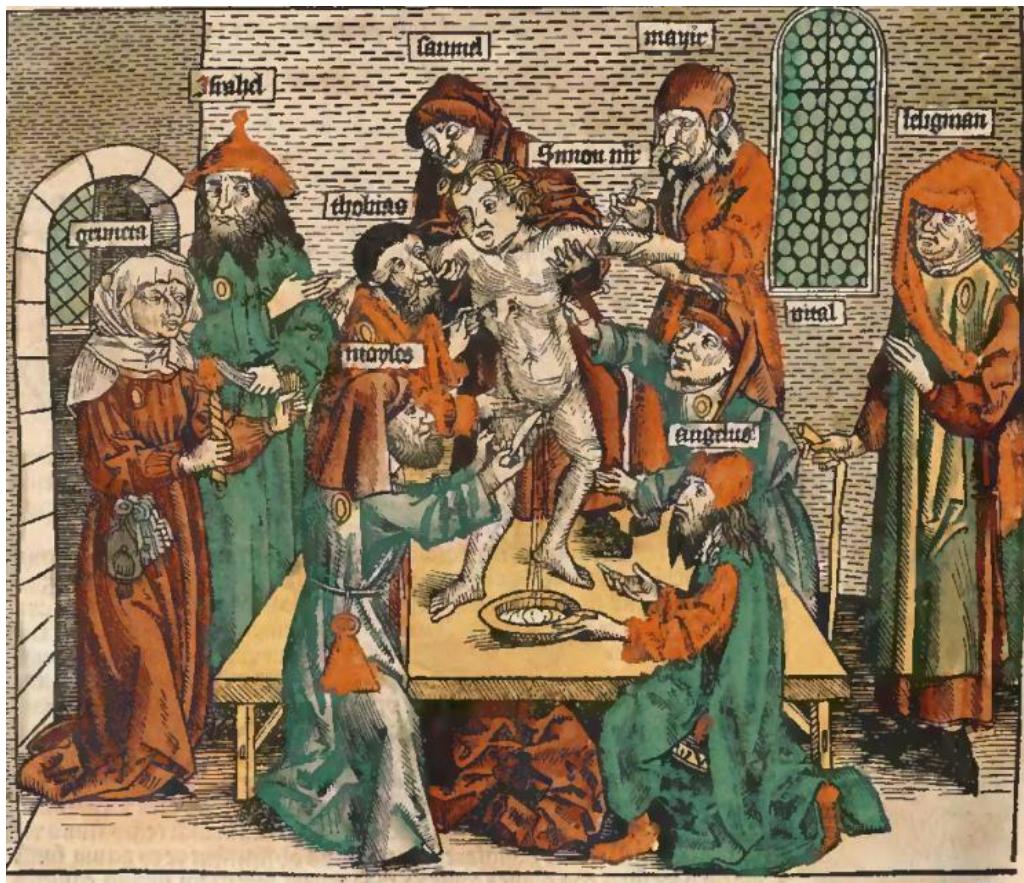


Figure 13: Detail from a woodcut in the Nuremberg Chronicle showing the martyrdom of William of Norwich at the hands of the Jews¹⁷⁹

The nature of the evidence presented by rood screens is of course fragmentary, but nevertheless substantial enough to discern certain trends. Discounting for the moment apostles, evangelists, the doctors of the Church, images of the Trinity and doubtful identifications (of which there are of course many), the surviving rood screens of Norfolk and Suffolk depict 88 separate saints in 291 images.¹⁸⁰ With six surviving depictions William ranks nineteenth in terms of the frequency of surviving depictions (see appendix 4). In terms of comparative popularity with other saints from the region, he is some way behind St. Edmund (17 surviving images) and St. Etheldreda (11 surviving images) and

¹⁷⁹ <https://dl.wdl.org>, accessed on 21.07.16

¹⁸⁰ Data compiled from: Williamson, W. W., 'Saints on Norfolk Rood-Screens and Pulpits', *Norfolk Archaeology* 30, (1952), Lillie, W. W., 'Screenwork in the County of Suffolk, Part III, Panels painted with Saints', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* XXI, (1933), Eve, J., *Saints and the painted rood-screens of north east Norfolk*, (Norwich, 1997), Baker, A., *English Panel Paintings 1400-1558, A survey of Figure Paintings on East Anglian Rood Screens*, (London, 2011)

must be compared with saints with limited regional appeal, such as St. Walstan or St. Withburgha. It is nevertheless surprising that William's cult still retained such a level of popularity more than three hundred years after its supposed zenith. Combined with the evidence that pilgrimage to his chapel on Household Heath continued into the sixteenth century it therefore has to be assumed that William retained his perceived efficacy as a pilgrimage saint rather more effectively than the accounts evidence derived from the sacrist's rolls alone would suggest. His fame never significantly spread beyond East Anglia (although a woodcut of his martyrdom is included in the *Liber Chronicarum*, the so called Nuremberg Chronicle first printed in 1493¹⁸¹, see figure 13), but endured within its regional confines from the mid twelfth to the early sixteenth centuries.

3.3. Blood and Bones: other relics at Norwich Cathedral

It has to be assumed that building up a collection of relics was always high on the list of priorities from the cathedral's foundation onwards, but the first mention of such a collection comes from the early thirteenth century. Bishop Pandulf, who served as papal legate in England, was consecrated Bishop of Norwich by Pope Honorius III in 1222.¹⁸² Bartholomew Cotton relates, that he gave the Norwich monks a 'chest with relics'¹⁸³ He was elected bishop of Norwich in July 1215¹⁸⁴ and conceivably donated the relics then, but it seems more likely that he carried them with him on his return from Rome in 1222. No record survives giving the extent or the details of this relic collection, but it may be assumed that at least some of them (it appears unlikely that the relics of Wustan or Gilbert originated in Italy), correspond to the relics detailed in the Patent Roll for 1234:

"Acknowledgement of the receipt by the hands of William, prior of the Holy Trinity, Norwich, of the following relics contained in a casket (*capsula*), to wit, of St. Gilbert two pieces (*particulas*), of St. Euphemia the like, of the Innocents the like, of St. Stephen four pieces, of St. Wulstan one piece, of St. Leger one piece, of St. Hermolaus one piece, of St.

¹⁸¹ <http://dl.wdl.org/>, accessed on 09.05.14

¹⁸² Wharton, H., *Anglia Sacra, Pars Prima*, (London, 1691), p. 410, see also Harper-Bill, C., ed., *English Episcopal Acta 21, Norwich 1215-1243*, (Oxford, 2000), p. xxiii

¹⁸³ Ibid, *Hic archam cum reliquis Monachis dedit*

¹⁸⁴ Vincent, N., 'The election of Pandulph Verraccio as bishop of Norwich (1215)', *Historical Research* 68 (1995), pp. 143–63

Nicholaus one piece, of St. Bartholomew one piece, of St. Philip one piece, of St. Petronella one piece, of Zachariah the Prophet one piece, of Aaron's rod one piece, to hold for the King's life, with promise that before his death or his heirs after his death will restore the same as he received them to the said church of the Holy Trinity"¹⁸⁵

No evidence could be found that the relics were ever returned to Norwich Cathedral. The fourteenth-century sacrist's rolls still mention oblations to four of the saints in the above list, namely SS Stephen, Nicholaus, Petronella and Leger, but it is of course impossible to say whether the Cathedral had their relics returned to them, still possessed relics of those saints (it is possible that they possessed more than the pieces given to Henry III, or that individual pieces were divided and only a part given away) or whether the altars simply remained in place even in the absence of the relics they were supposed to house. It is equally impossible to say what ultimately happened to the relics after they were taken from Norwich by the king. They were not at any rate incorporated, at least in the long term, in the relic collection at Westminster. Relics of six of the thirteen saints (Bartholomew, Stephen, Nicholas, Petronilla, Philip and the Holy Innocents) mentioned above did repose at Westminster in the fifteenth century, but none of these, according to the chronicler John Flete, who compiled the relic list, was given by Henry III.¹⁸⁶ It is difficult to construct a solid case for the fact that Norwich Cathedral did not possess any significant relics prior to Pandulf's gift or that the collection Henry III took away represented a major part of the collection. No other relic list exists for Norwich Cathedral and the only source of information regarding the relics possessed by the cathedral in its later history are the surviving sacrist's accounts. The simple fact that a comparatively spurious and divisive figure like William was promoted with such vigour does of course indicate that in the mid-twelfth century no significant focal point for pilgrimage existed within the cathedral, but Thomas of Monmouth is even more specific than this. He relates a vision that was granted him, in which Herbert Losinga appeared to him and ordered him to expedite the translation of William's remains into the Chapter House. According to Thomas, Herbert had this message for the monks: "Let them remember that their wont

¹⁸⁵ PRO, *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1232-1247*, (London, 1906), p. 39

¹⁸⁶ Armitage Robinson, J., ed., *The History of Westminster Abbey by John Flete*, (Cambridge, 1909), p. 68-73

was when I used to set out for the court of the King, to pray of me that I should endeavour to obtain from the King some venerable relics of the Saints as an ornament of their Church. But I used to say to them that I would seek for nothing of this sort then...because the time would come when...they would have such great and worshipful relics..."¹⁸⁷ The implication is clear: the time is now and William's bones are the 'worshipful relics'. This passage does however also make it abundantly clear that by the mid-twelfth century the cathedral seemed to possess no relics.

One important relic did however certainly arrive before the collection donated by Pandulf and is not included in the list of relics removed by Henry III. In 1171 Clement, the precentor of Norwich, succeeded in gaining a portion of the Holy Blood of Christ recently re-discovered at the abbey of Fécamp and brought it to Norwich. An account of this translation survives in a manuscript at Cambridge and another at Oxford. The latter can be dated to around 1300 and gives details regarding the later history of the relic at Norwich Cathedral.¹⁸⁸ According to the tradition preserved in this manuscript the relic arrived in Norwich in 1171 enclosed in a vase ornamented with silver (*vasculo argenteo*), which was later housed in a great silver cup (*cupam argenteam magnum*), given for this purpose by Bishop Walter Suffield. This adornment of the blood relic must therefore have occurred during the time of Suffield's episcopate (1243-1256). It is almost certainly the cup referred to in the will of Walter Suffield: *Item, cathedrali ecclesie mee Norwicensi lego magnum cupam meam cum elevaturis ad corpus Cristi reponendum et ad reliquias si voluerint.* "Item to my cathedral church of Norwich I leave my great cup with the handles for the reception of the body of Christ and for sacred relics if desired".¹⁸⁹ The account does not give any details of how the relic was received in Norwich or of any cult or miracles surrounding it. This reticence does imply that the cult was less than successful and that the relic did not bring the hoped for revenues and pilgrims during the

¹⁸⁷ James & Jessop, *Thomas of Monmouth*, p. 117

¹⁸⁸ The account is printed in full in Vincent, N., *The Holy Blood: King Henry III and the Westminster Blood Relic*, (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 209-10. The account of the arrival of this blood relic in Norwich survives in three manuscripts: British Library Cotton MS Vitellius D III, Cambridge, Gonville & Caius College, MS 61/155 and British Library Harley MS 1801, fo.9

¹⁸⁹ "Item, to my cathedral church of Norwich I give my great cup with the handles for keeping the host and relics if so wished" (author translation), Harper-Bill, C., ed., *English Episcopal Acta 32, Norwich 1244-1266*, (Oxford, 2007), p. 150

intervening eighty or so years. Indeed, the beautification of the relic in the mid-thirteenth century may have been an attempt to re-kindle interest in it. The chronicler goes on to say that the relic remained in this cup on display until the year 1272 with ‘everyone continuing to venerate it’. Whether this rather sparse plaudit refers to a real upswing in the relic’s popularity cannot now be determined, but in any case in the same year a great fire raged through the cathedral and despite attempts to save the relic the crystal vase was cracked and the reliquary was partly destroyed. Miraculously the greater part of the actual blood survived and was rehoused in a newly made reliquary. It is curious to note that no entry in the sacrist’s rolls following the fire mentions oblations given to this relic. Two different explanations may account for this. Firstly, and despite the chronicler’s assertions to the contrary, the relic may not have survived the great fire of 1272, or the newly made reliquary purporting to house the remains of the one damaged in the fire did not gain any sort of popularity and public acceptance and a cult therefore did not develop around it. Secondly, and possibly more likely, the blood relic was incorporated into the so-called ‘Reliquary Arch’, built in 1278 in the north aisle of the presbytery.¹⁹⁰ The *De Antiquis Legibus Liber*, compiled only a few years after the fire at the cathedral, reports that ‘all the relics of the saints’ had been destroyed in the fire,¹⁹¹ but it is of course possible that the destruction was not entirely wholesale and that all the damaged and possibly now unlabelled relics were incorporated into this arch to generate a focal point for saintly veneration as quickly as possible after the fire. With the possible exception of the blood relic, little is known about the nature of those relics (save for the likelihood that some were brought to the cathedral by Pandulf). Clues as to their nature may be found in the wall paintings of the Ante-Reliquary Chapel in the north presbytery aisle. Together with the Apostles, the saints depicted are: SS Martin, Nicholas, Richard of Chichester, Margaret, Catherine and Mary, and less certainly identifiable king Edmund, Thomas Becket and St. Lawrence. With the exception of Richard of Chichester, these saints were commemorated by feasts *in cappis* (to be celebrated by the clergy in copes) in the priory’s

¹⁹⁰ Shinners, ‘Veneration of Saints’, p. 139

¹⁹¹ Quo igne invalescente, Berefridus succenditur et omnia domicilia monachorum et etiam, ut quidam dicunt, Cathedralis ecclesia, pro dolor! Cum omnibus reliquiis sanctorum, libras et ornamentis ecclesie; ita quod quicquid comburi poterat, deductum est in cineres, excepta quadam capella, que incombusta remansit. The Camden Society, *De Antiquis Legibus Liber*, (London, 1846), p. 146

Customary¹⁹² in the second half of the thirteenth century. The inclusion of these saints in the Customary, and in the wall paintings suggests the presence of their relics within the arch. Richard of Chichester's relics may have come to the cathedral as a result of his association with Walter Suffield.¹⁹³ The argument, that the blood relic was included within the reliquary arch may be strengthened by the comparatively high oblation figures recorded in the sacrist's rolls for the arch. With very few exceptions the figures for the reliquary arch are consistently the second highest, exceeded only by offerings to the High Altar.¹⁹⁴ Such a high level of offerings suggests the inclusion of some fairly significant relics, such as the relic of the Holy Blood and the panoply indicated by the wall paintings, and may point towards a continued popularity of the blood relic, as well as, perhaps to a lesser degree, the relics of those saints depicted .

3.4. The sacrist's rolls

From the late thirteenth century onward a discussion of the saints venerated at Norwich Cathedral can move to the comparatively firm terrain provided by the sacrist's accounts. Seventy-one rolls (excluding duplicates, sacrist's rolls concerned with matters other than the recording of offerings and rolls compiled after 1453) survive that record oblations to the various tombs, chapels, images and other focal points for veneration within the cathedral. The series is by no means comprehensive, a lacuna of twenty years, from 1343 to 1363, is particularly detrimental to any attempts to chart the progress of certain focal points, as well as the level of offerings during the mid-fourteenth century plague epidemic. Additionally, individual sacrist's may have employed different methods to arrive at the figures as set down in the rolls, and their attention to various locations where oblations were received differs markedly.¹⁹⁵ Caveats regarding their reliability and use to determine precise figures for offerings need therefore be applied. A number of

¹⁹² Tollhurst, J. B. L., ed., *The Customary of the Cathedral Priory Church of Norwich*, HBS 82, (1948), pp. 1-12

¹⁹³ Binski, P., 'The Ante-Reliquary Chapel Paintings in Norwich Cathedral: The Holy Blood, St. Richard, and All Saints', in Luxford, J. M. & Michael, M. A., eds., *Tributes to Nigel Morgan, Contexts of Medieval Art: Objects & Ideas*, (London, 2010), pp. 241-261, pp. 250-1

¹⁹⁴ Due to the position of the Reliquary Arch near the High Altar, it is possible, and indeed even likely, that a portion of the offerings given to the relics housed in the arch was recorded in the oblations to the High Altar.

¹⁹⁵ The rolls compiled during William Worstede's years as sacrist (1427-1435, DCN 1/4/63-74) yield particularly detailed oblation figures.

these rolls will be discussed to chart the popularity of pilgrimage to the cathedral as a whole, and to the saints within it from 1272 to 1453 (rolls compiled after this year do not record the income of the various shrines separately and are therefore of limited use in this study); details of the rest can be found in appendix 5. As mentioned above the Reliquary Arch features prominently in the rolls throughout the entire period.

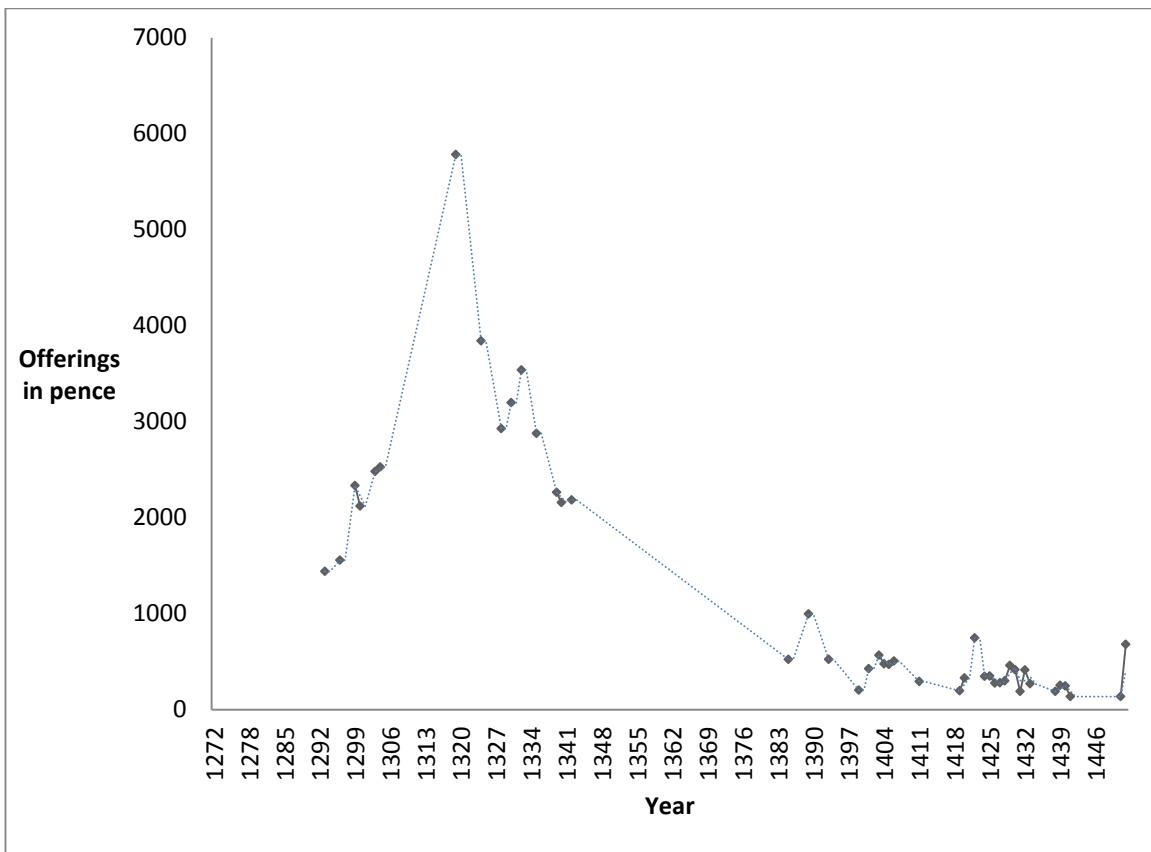


Figure 14: Oblations given at the 'Reliquary Arch' at Norwich Cathedral¹⁹⁶

The earliest mention of this arch, in the rolls always referred to simply as '*de reliquiis*', comes in the roll of 1293, when £6 were collected there. For the next quarter of a century oblations to the relics rose fairly sharply and reached a high point in 1320 with £24 2s. As can be seen from the above graph, there then follows an initially precipitous decline, followed by a period of steady, if greatly reduced levels of oblations during the last two decades of the fourteenth and the first half of the fifteenth century. There is no evidence

¹⁹⁶ Graph by author, income figures from NRO DCN 1/4/11, 12-16, 20, 23, 25-27, 30, 32-34, 37, 38, 40, 42, 45-50, 55-59, 61-71, 76, 78-82

to suggest that the Reliquary Arch lost popularity through the removal of certain relics or the rise in popularity of another focal point within the cathedral. It seems more likely that the decline in offerings can be attributed to the general decline in offerings experienced throughout the cathedral as a whole. A very similar income pattern is revealed by closer examination of the offerings given to St. Hippolyte (figure 15). Again oblations rose from their first mention in the late thirteenth century and reached their high point in 1319, but declined by around 87 per cent in the following sixty-five years.

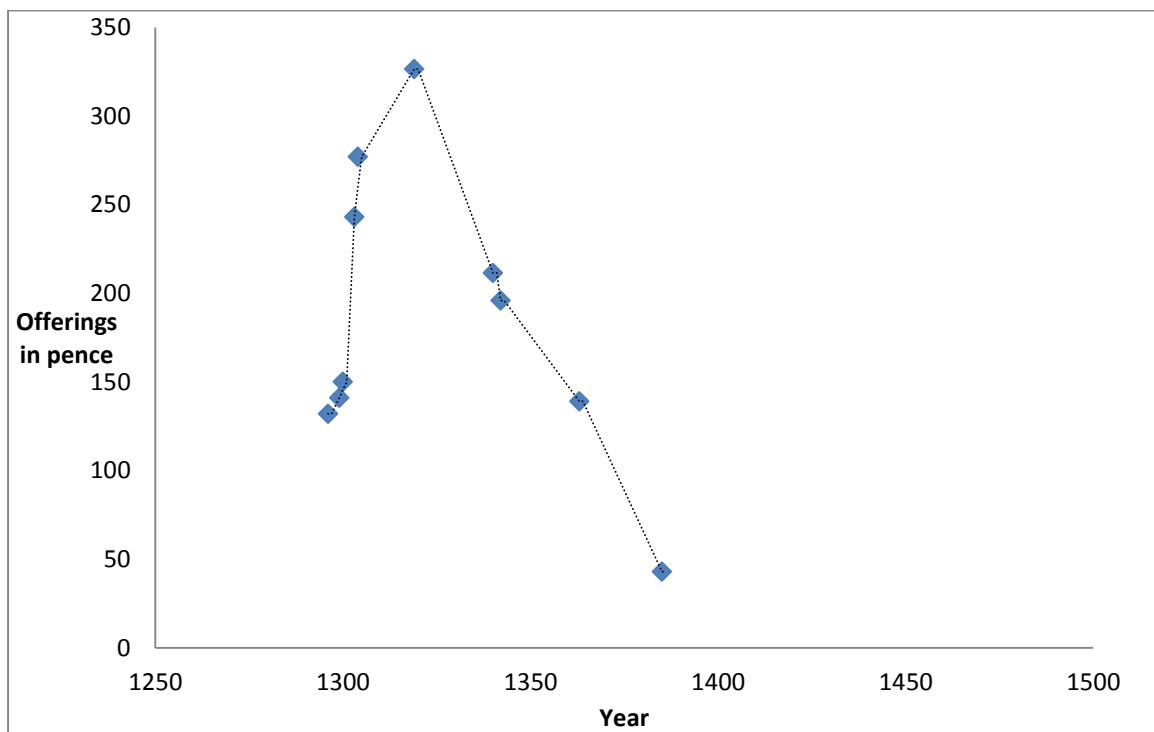


Figure 15: Oblations given to St. Hippolyte at Norwich Cathedral¹⁹⁷

St. Hippolyte continues to occur in the sacrist's rolls until the year 1442, and income from offerings equally peaks in about 1320. From 1385 onwards oblations to his altar are accounted for as part of various groupings with other saints and it is therefore impossible to accurately discern the level of received oblations. The relatively small sums for these groupings as noted by the sacrist do however suggest that his popularity continued to decline. Even income to altars and chapels of saints which elsewhere continued to enjoy enduring and often increasing popularity were not immune from this decline. The Chapel

¹⁹⁷ Graph by author, income figures from DCN 1/4/12-16, 20, 33-35, 37

of St. Mary occurs in the sacrist's rolls from 1272 until 1441 and the offerings recorded there accord to the by now familiar pattern of initial increase followed by a period of relatively steep decline. The high point in terms of income levels occurred slightly earlier than in the aforementioned examples; in 1278 oblations were recorded as £20 14 s. By the 1340s however recorded oblations hovered around £1, a decline in received income of 95 per cent in sixty years, with the last recorded income in 1441 giving the oblations to the chapel as 4 1/2d. The cathedral priory's efforts to cultivate a local cult other than that of St. William equally met with very limited success. The first such attempt was made with the promotion of the tomb of Bishop Walter Suffield. It first appears in the accounts in the year 1293 and oblations to it were recorded as £3 10 s. But the inevitable decline in oblations (and with it presumably interest in the cult of Walter Suffield) can again be tracked through the closing years of the thirteenth and the first four decades of the fourteenth century. By 1342 oblations had fallen to 48 shillings, again representing a 95 per cent decline in offerings. By 1411 offerings were at 2 1/2d., and the tomb is never again mentioned in the rolls thereafter. A second Norwich Bishop, John Salmon, was also posthumously pressed into service by the priory monks in another attempt to provide the cathedral with a local saint. Offerings to his tomb are first recorded in 1328, just three years after his death. The interest of the local and regional population in this new cult did however seem to be particularly reluctant and short-lived. Offerings in that year came to £2 7s. 8d., but thereafter the oblations never rose and they never rallied. Just fourteen years later the oblations given at his tomb had dropped by 94 percent to just 2s. 11 1/2d. In 1363, his tomb is accounted as having received 3d. in offerings and is never recorded again afterwards. Even when compared with the other examples given above the decline and death of this embryonic cult seems particularly steep and sudden (the cult of his predecessor Walter Suffield endured within the records for more than a hundred years compared with John Salmon's thirty-five). It may simply be that the Norwich citizenry were unconvinced by the saintly attributes of a seemingly very worldly bishop, whose time and energy was spent as much representing the interests of Edward II (he undertook a number of diplomatic missions for the king early in his reign and held the office of Lord Chancellor from 1320-1323¹⁹⁸) as that of his diocese. Additionally, and unlike Walter

¹⁹⁸ www.oxforddnb.com, accessed on 18.07.14

Suffield, he was not Norfolk born and may therefore not have been regarded as a local saint worthy of adoration.

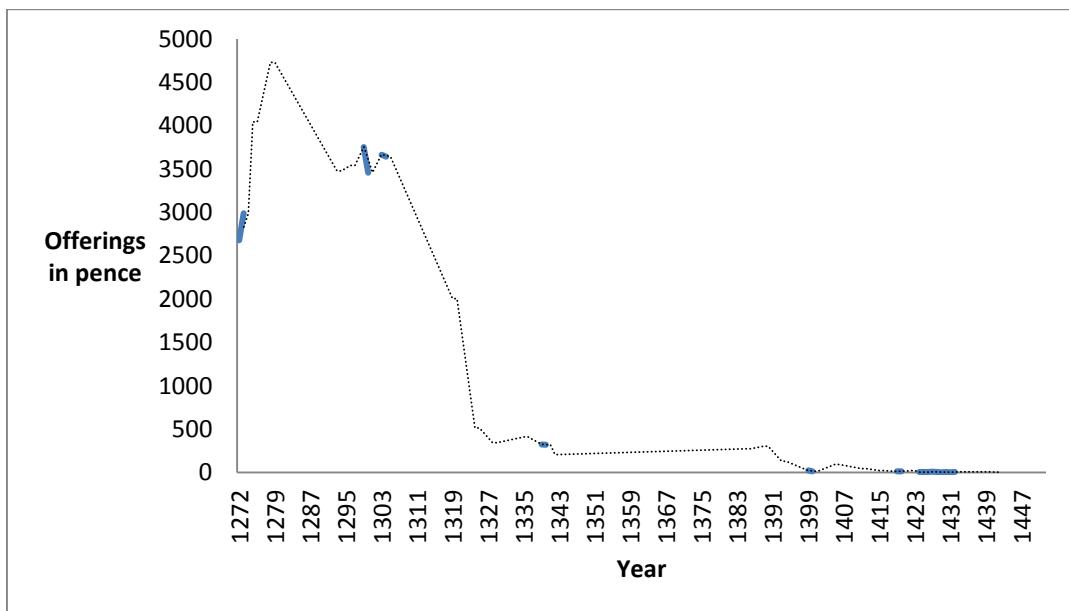


Figure 16: Oblations to the Chapel of St. Mary at Norwich Cathedral¹⁹⁹

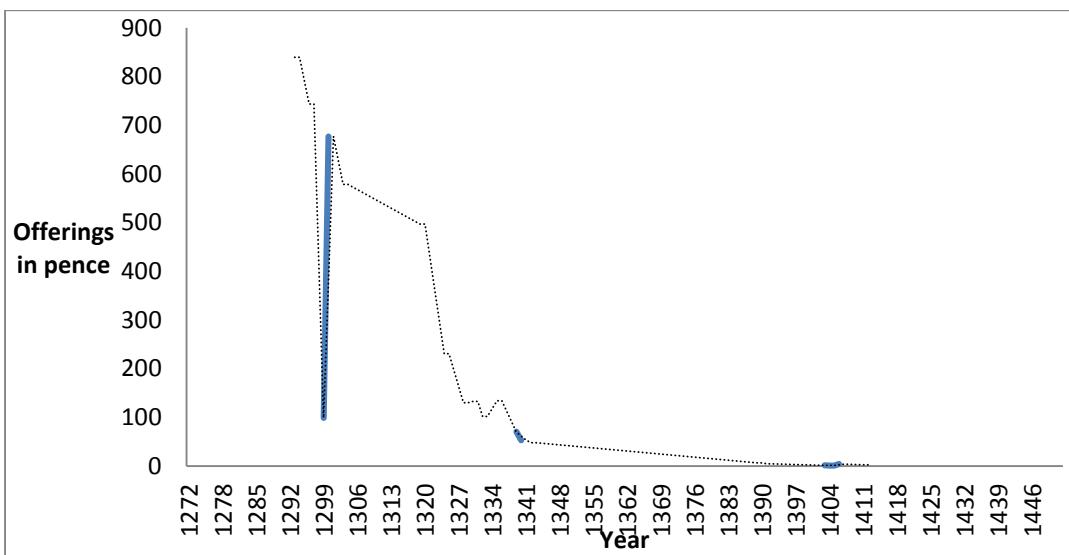


Figure 17: Oblations to the tomb of Bishop Walter Suffield at Norwich Cathedral²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ Graph by author, income figures from DCN 1/4/1-4, 11-15, 16, 20, 23, 25, 31-34, 37, 38, 40, 42, 44, 47, 50, 51, 55-71, 78, 80

²⁰⁰ Graph by author, income figures from DCN 1/4/11-15, 20, 23, 25-27, 31-34, 38, 39, 46-50

It may however simply be the case that this attempt at the establishment of a new cult simply came at a particularly inauspicious time; offerings income throughout the cathedral's altars, chapels and offerings boxes was dwindling.

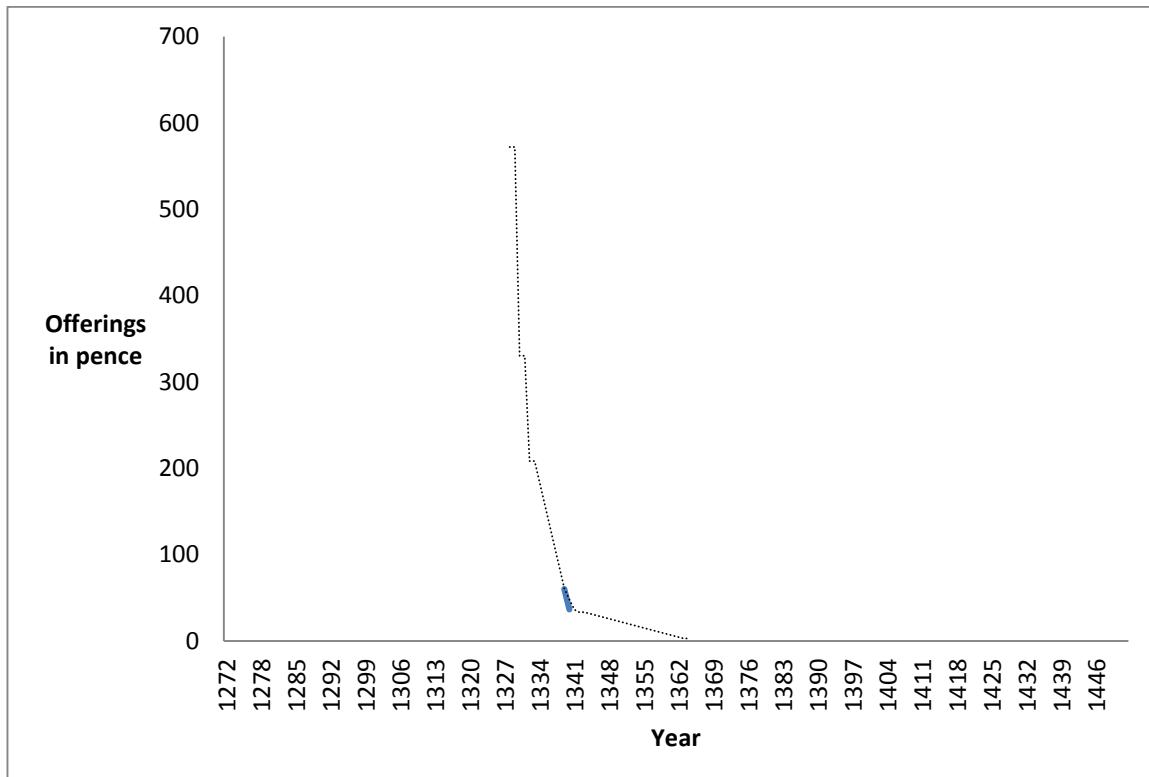


Figure 18: Oblations to the tomb of Bishop John Salmon at Norwich Cathedral²⁰¹

Following the failure of so many of the focal points for pilgrims and worshippers within the cathedral to attract and hold interest and popularity in the first half of the fourteenth century it is possible to discern a distinct second campaign by the priory monks to establish 'new' saints ('new' in the sense that no focal point for veneration had hitherto existed within the cathedral to such a saint) to engage the faithful. SS Sitha, Petronilla, Apollonia, Nicholas, Anne, Anthony, Leger, Eloi and Catherine all appear for the first time in the rolls either in the second half of the fourteenth century or early in the fifteenth. This campaign to introduce saints into the cathedral was not one off restructuring, but rather a continual process of adding new focal points for devotion. Sadly, for the monks, the pattern established in the first half of the fourteenth century, of steep decline

²⁰¹ Graph by author, income figures from NRO DCN 1/4/25-27, 32-35

following a brief period of interest, repeats itself in almost all cases once again. The only exceptions are a number of account entries for saints where there was not even a brief period of interest and the sacrist's recorded low offerings from their first to their last appearance within the rolls. Given below are income charts of the most noteworthy of these new additions.

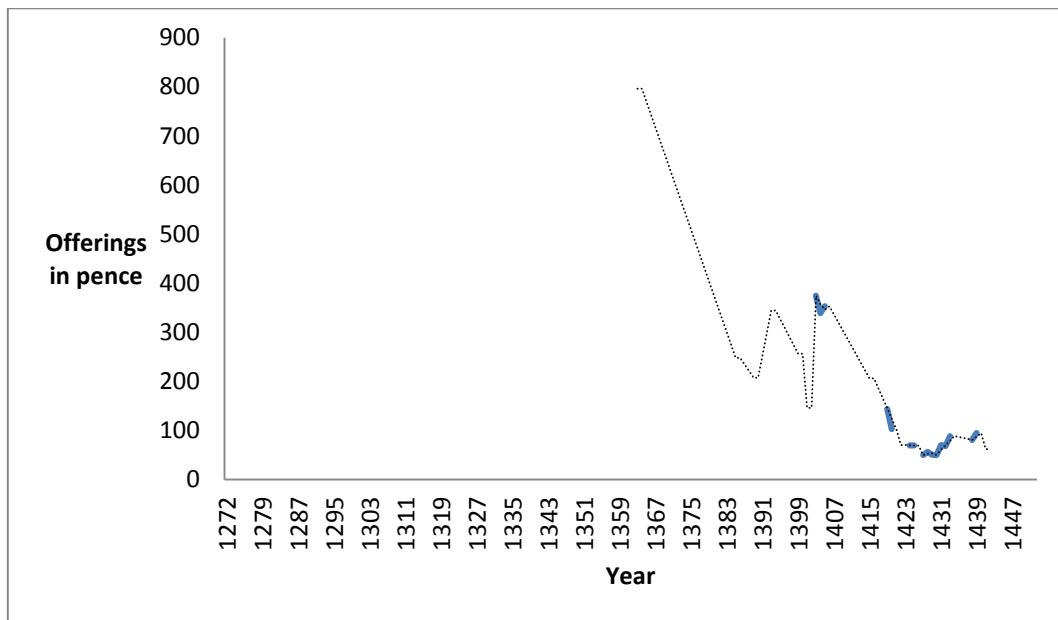


Figure 19: Offerings to St. Sitha at Norwich Cathedral²⁰²

The monks attempted to install focal points not only of saints new to the locality, but equally of saints whose cult was still in the process of being established and therefore should at least provide a certain novelty value, such as the Augustinian prior John of Bridlington. The first mention of John of Bridlington comes in the roll for 1415. John himself only died in 1379 and his cult had seemingly spread throughout England by the late 1380s. He was canonized by Boniface IX in 1401²⁰³ and his body was translated to a newly erected shrine at Bridlington Priory in Yorkshire in 1404.²⁰⁴ This saint should have been, at least in the East Anglian context, a relative novelty with the potential to attract pilgrims. But, as can be seen in figure 23 below, the long established pattern of brief, if limited interest, followed by rapid decline also asserted itself after the introduction of this

²⁰² Graph by author, income figures from DCN 1/4/35, 37, 38, 40, 42, 45-48, 50, 55-59, 61-73, 76, 78, 80

²⁰³ www.oxforddnb.com/14856, accessed on 13.08.14

²⁰⁴ Ibid

saint. In the sacrist's rolls he is always paired with St. Gatianus, so the level of offerings given to John of Bridlington cannot now be determined, but their combined oblations never exceed 10s. 4d. (recorded in the year both these saints are first mentioned).

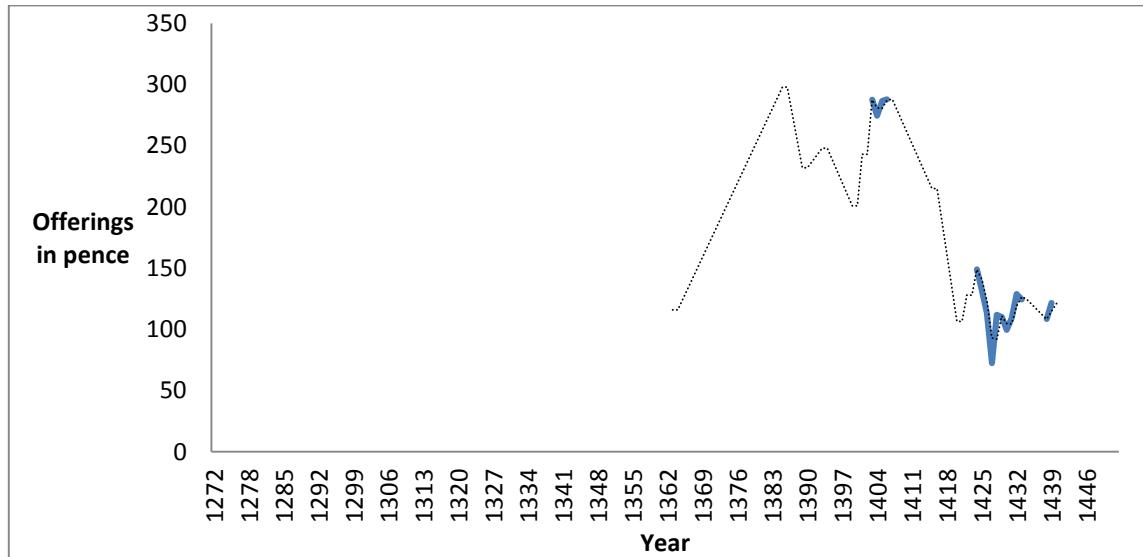


Figure 20: Offerings to St. Eloi at Norwich Cathedral²⁰⁵

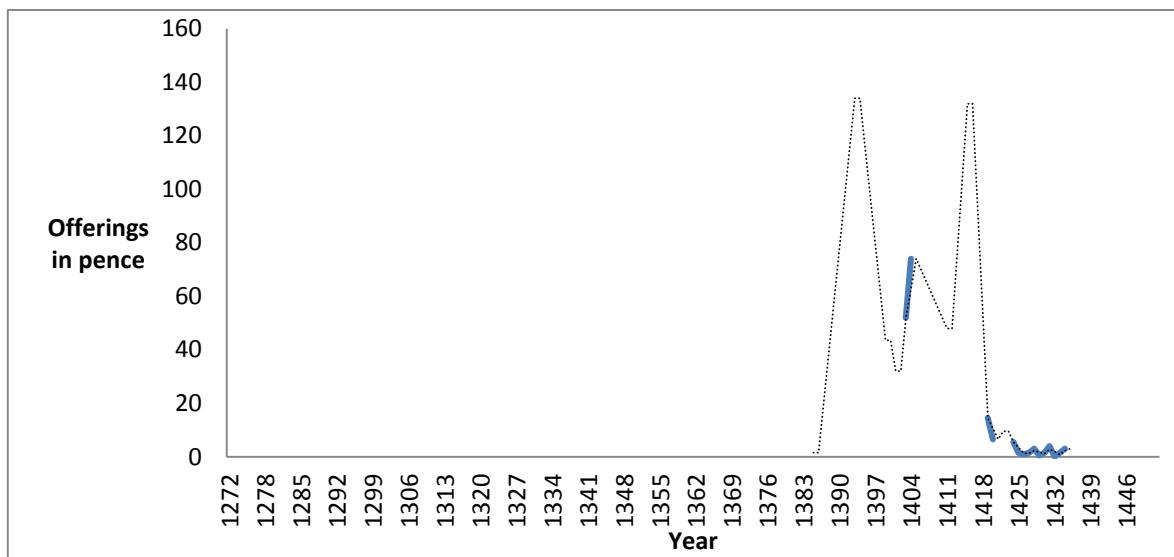


Figure 21: Offerings to St. Petronilla at Norwich Cathedral²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵ Graph by author, income figures from DCN 1/4/35, 37, 38, 40, 43, 45-48, 51, 56-73, 76, 78

²⁰⁶ Graph by author, income figures from DCN 1/4/37, 40, 42, 45-51, 55-74

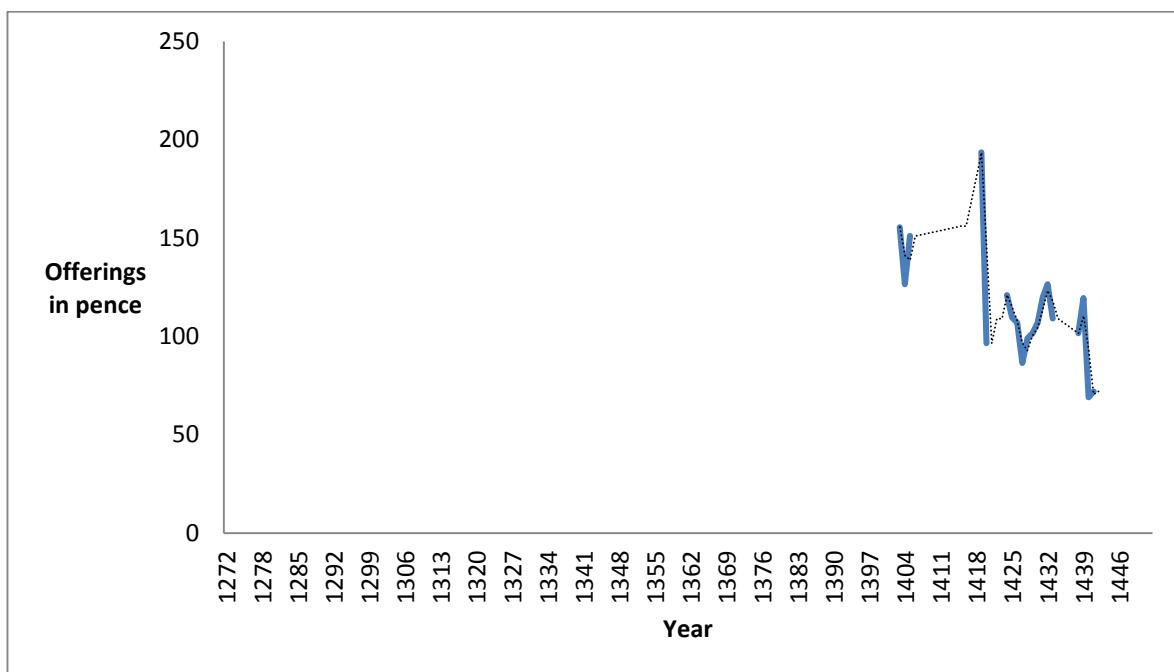


Figure 22: Offerings to St. Apollonia at Norwich Cathedral²⁰⁷

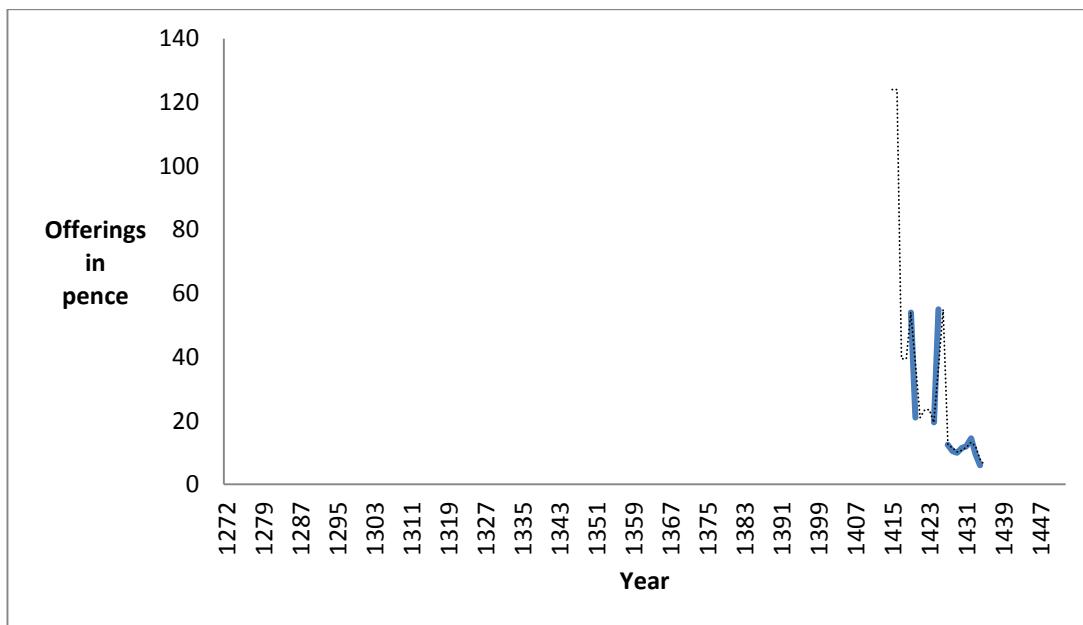


Figure 23: Offerings to St. Gatianus and John 'de Bredlyngton' at Norwich Cathedral²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ Graph by author, income figures from DCN 1/4/46-48, 51, 55-73, 76, 78-80

²⁰⁸ Graph by author, income figures from NRO DCN 1/4/51, 52, 55-59, 61-74

3.5. Conclusions

In summary it can be said that Norwich Cathedral, despite the best efforts of the community of monks there, perhaps never fulfilled its full potential as a supra-regional centre of pilgrimage. Following the fairly steep decline in income received by the Marian shrine and the Reliquary Arch in the cathedral in the early fourteenth century the priories of Walsingham and Bromholm, both within a hard day's walk from the city attracted seemingly far greater numbers of pilgrims throughout the remainder of the period covered by the sacrist's rolls. Somewhat further afield, but still within relatively easy reach were the shrines to St. Etheldreda at Ely and the many East Anglian Marian shrines in Suffolk, as well as a number of other, more modest, but nevertheless popular, locations. It is difficult to determine the factors that led Norwich to fail in this respect; the lack of a native saint of any great standing may well have played a part, but cannot be held singly responsible. It could reasonably be speculated that the city and the priory enjoyed a somewhat acrimonious relationship following the riots of 1271 leading pilgrims to seek help elsewhere, but this is simply not borne out by the sacrists' accounts; it is only in the early fourteenth century, some two generations after the riots, that oblations began to decline. It was of course not a rare occurrence for a monastic institution either not to court pilgrims and their trade, or to do so, but fail to establish a significant reputation for their relics and images to build up a lasting groundswell of support that would ensure their locale as a fixture on the English pilgrim map. What makes Norwich stand out from other such institutions is the size and wealth of both the priory and the city, meaning that it was not for a lack of resources on the priory's part or for a lack of people ready to visit the cathedral's shrines, that pilgrimage to it failed to become established at a nationally or even regionally significant level. Apathy on the part of the monks may also be discounted, given the sustained efforts detailed above to attract pilgrims to the cathedral. Turner & Turner's definition of pilgrimage as a temporary liminal state, in which the pilgrim traverses the social as well as the geographical margins of his or her society may also be cited in this regard.²⁰⁹ To put it simply, the inhabitants of

²⁰⁹ Turner, V. & Turner, E., *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, (Oxford, 1978), pp. 4-10

Norwich would not have experienced this liminality by going across town to Norwich Cathedral and arguably neither would the inhabitants of the densely settled countryside around the city. According to Turner & Turner's definition, a pilgrimage to the comparatively barren and much more sparsely populated North Norfolk coast to visit the shrines of Walsingham and Bromholm may have seemed a better alternative. This can at best however have been a contributing factor, since the priory at Norwich cathedral, as shall be seen at several junctures below, was by no means the only pilgrim location in the care of a monastic community to suffer a similar, if not always such a complete, withdrawal of public support.

Bury St. Edmunds

“Sic nos Edmundus, nulli virtute secundus,

Lux, pater, et patrie Gloria magna sue;

Sceptra manum, diadema caput, sua purpura corpus

Ornat ei, sed plus vincula, mucro, cruor!”²¹⁰

4.1. Beginnings: *Eadmund Rex Anglorum*

No survey of East Anglia’s pilgrim centres would be complete without a study of the cult of St. Edmund, both at Bury and in other locations within the region and further afield. His is one of the few cults that, after having come to prominence in the Anglo-Saxon period retained (along with St. Etheldreda at Ely and a number of less popular cults such as SS Walstan, Blyth and Anna) their popularity and appeal in the wake of the Norman Conquest. Indeed, the development of his cult, its hagiography and distribution of relics and loci of veneration is intrinsically linked with the post-conquest political machinations of both lay men and ecclesiasts connected with the abbey at Bury St. Edmunds. Historical sources for the life and reign of Edmund are, as is to be expected, extremely sparse. The twelfth century ‘Annals of St. Neots’ (believed to be a copy of a now lost version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle)²¹¹ gives the date of his ascension to the throne of the kingdom of East Anglia as 855²¹² and all texts of the Chronicle agree that his death occurred at the hands of the *micel here* (the great conglomerate army, that raided the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms in the 860s and 870s) in 870 (869). As is customary for entries in the Chronicle for this period the facts are related in a rather stark manner: “This year the army rode

²¹⁰ “So Edmund adorns our race, a hero second to none,
His country’s light, and father, and great glory;
Whose hand the sceptre, whose head the diadem, whose body the purple
Decorates; but how much more the chain, the sword, the ruby stain!” – from BL Cotton MS Titus D XXIV,
Hervey, F., ed., trans., *Corolla Sancti Eadmundi*, (London, 1907), pp. 166-167

²¹¹ Dumville, D. & Lapidge, M., ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, A Collaborative Edition, Volume 17, The Annals of St. Neots*, (Cambridge, 1985)

²¹² Ibid, p. 45

across Mercia into East-Anglia, and took up their winter quarters at Thetford: and the same winter king Edmund fought against them, and the Danes got the victory, and slew the king, and subdued all the land, and destroyed all the minsters which they came to.”²¹³ Although the next item of textual evidence is not provided until Abbo of Fleury’s *Passio Sancti Edmundi* of 985 the early progress of the cult can nevertheless be glimpsed through the archaeological record.

To date more than 2000 coins bearing different variants of the inscription ‘*Sce Eadmund Rex*’ have been recovered as part of coin hoards, archaeological excavation and chance finds. The coins vary considerably in inscription detail, weight and a host of other numismatic indicators and must therefore be the product of several mints and moneymen.²¹⁴ Blunt proposes a date range for the production of these coins from c. 892-910,²¹⁵ while Blackburn and Pagan argue for a date range from c. 895 to 918.²¹⁶ It is by no means clear where the coinage was struck, but it seems certain that it was intended for use as a predominantly East Anglian currency. This coinage is significant for a number of reasons, but in this context of course chiefly for the light it can shed on the early progress of the cult of St. Edmund. The mere existence of the coins at the close of the ninth century points towards the fact that the cult of Edmund had built up considerable reputation and fame since his death some two decades earlier. The Danish rulers of East Anglia in the period following the death of Guthrum-Athelstan in 890 clearly wished to advertise and publicise their newly acquired Christian image by choosing the (in terms of Anglo-Saxon coinage) nearly unprecedented step of depicting a saint rather than a king on their coinage. Moreover they did not choose a well-established, politically ‘neutral’ saint (as was the case with coins minted at Rochester in the 830s, which bore the inscription *SCS ANDREAS (APOSTOLUS)*)²¹⁷, but an erstwhile king of the Anglo-Saxons, martyred by their forebears only a generation earlier. There is of course no evidence regarding the motives for the creation of this coinage, but it may nevertheless be valid to indulge in

²¹³ Giles, J. A., ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, (London, 1914), p. 50

²¹⁴ Blunt, C. E., ‘The St. Edmund memorial coinage’, *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute for Archaeology* 31 (1969), pp. 234-255

²¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 253

²¹⁶ Blackburn, M. A. S. & Pagan, H., ‘The St. Edmund coinage in the light of a parcel from a hoard of St. Edmund pennies’, *British Numismatic Journal* LXXII (2002), p. 1-14

²¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 2

some speculation. As mentioned above, there seems little doubt that this coinage is indicative of the cult having attained substantial fame and support among the local populace and it may well have been that the Danish rulers of East Anglia wished not only openly to profess their new found Christianity, but also to hitch Edmund to the wagon of their legitimacy. Edmund therefore functions not only as a saint on these coins, but also as the former ruler of the province in whose name the Danes came to take ownership of it. The entanglement between politics and religion then, which repeatedly surfaces in the history of the cult of Edmund, can be seen to be present from its earliest times.

The popularity of the cult of Edmund from the cessation of the minting of his memorial coinage in the second decade of the tenth century until Abbo's *Passio* of 985 is difficult to determine. Antonia Gransden interpreted the demise of the coinage along with his absence in liturgical calendars of the period as evidence of a diminution of his appeal and popularity.²¹⁸ Arguing from absence of evidence with regards to the notoriously ill-attested tenth century Danelaw can at best, however, be described as putative, and other factors may be taken into account to explain, for example, the discontinuation of the coinage. The re-conquest of the Danelaw under Edward the Elder,²¹⁹ and the administrative upheaval it no doubt brought to East Anglia in the late 910s is an equally likely candidate for such changes. Popularity aside, it seems highly likely that the cult endured uninterrupted for the remainder of the tenth century. It had, after all, grown and prospered under Danish rule, unlike many other cults and monastic or semi-monastic institutions of Anglo-Saxon saints that had come to prominence in the pre-Viking period (such as St. Etheldreda and her monastic foundation at Ely, see chapter 5) only to be driven to the brink of extinction between the arrival of the *micel here* and the monastic reforms of the 970s. His cult must at least still have been of some regional repute since the monks of Ramsey commissioned Abbo of Fleury to write his *Passio* of Edmund while staying at their monastery. Why the Ramsey monks chose a saint whose relics they did not possess as the subject for such treatment is not entirely clear; Gransden suggests that the ultimate agent in the commissioning may have been Ramsey's (co-) founder

²¹⁸ Gransden, A., 'The legends and traditions concerning the origins of the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds', *The English Historical Review* 100 (1985), pp. 1-24, p. 3

²¹⁹ Stanton, F., *Anglo-Saxon England*, Third Edition, (Oxford, 2001), pp. 333-336

Oswald,²²⁰ whose interest in Northumbrian saints is well attested and who may have wished to immortalise the saints south of the Humber. The commissioning may conversely be indicative of either a continued high level of appeal exerted by the cult of Edmund and the Ramsey monks' consequent wish to take part ownership of the future narrative or indeed a substantial drop in the cult's popularity, necessitating a revival and rescue operation in the shape of Abbo's *Passio*. Abbo's work is a brief account of the events leading to Edmund's death at the hands of the Danes, his martyrdom, the immediate signs of Edmund's sanctity following his murder and a small number of miracles. His account is chiefly notable for claiming an unbroken link of eye and ear witnesses stretching from Edmund to Abbo himself; he claims that he had heard the story from Dunstan shortly before his death, who in his turn overheard the story as a young man at the court of King Athelstan, where the aged sword bearer of King Edmund himself, who had it from an eyewitness account of the event, told it to the King.²²¹ The *topoi* explored in Abbo's text are by and large familiar from other hagiographies, most notably from the early lives of SS Sebastian, Dionysius (Denis) and Mary of Egypt.²²² At the conclusion of his text Abbo hints at the popularity of the cult and the many miracles worked by Edmund,²²³ but to what degree this reflects historical reality, rather than hagiographical bias is impossible to determine.

All that can be said with some degree of certainty is that by the later tenth century a cult of St. Edmund existed at Beodricesworth (Bury St. Edmunds). The exact date of the arrival of Edmund's remains in Bury from their original resting place is unknown. Abbo is vague on the matter, but Herman, a later hagiographer of Edmund, was long thought to have fixed it in the reign of Athelstan²²⁴ (924-939). As Licence has recently demonstrated however, 'Athelstan' is a palimpsest inserted into the text at a later date²²⁵ and does not offer any clues as to the saint's initial translation to Beodericesworth. A charter of King Edmund, dated 945, mentions the "monastery situated in the place called

²²⁰ Ibid

²²¹ <http://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/source/870abbo-edmund.asp>, accessed on 02.03.15

²²² Ibid, pp. 6-8

²²³ Arnold, T., ed., *Memorials of St. Edmund's Abbey, Volume I*, (London, 1890), p. 23

²²⁴ Ibid, p. xxi

²²⁵ Licence, T., trans., ed., *Herman the Archdeacon and Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, Miracles of St. Edmund*, (Oxford, 2014), pp. xviii - xix

Bedericesworth”,²²⁶ suggesting that the relics and a surrounding monastic community had perhaps recently been established there. The charter’s authenticity is however doubtful, with historians’ appraisals ranging from ‘dubious’ (Keynes) to ‘not certainly spurious’ (Sharpe).²²⁷ Some agreement however exists in the fact that the boundaries mentioned in the charter are of pre-conquest date and the document may be an embellishment/forgery of a lost Edmund charter. The later monastic community at Bury however adopted Cnut, and not Edmund, as their founder. This claim chiefly rests upon another charter of doubtful authenticity. A charter of King Cnut of around 1021, granted the monks “all the fishing that Ulfkytel owned at Wells, and my toll-fish which accrue to me from maritime lands”,²²⁸ as well as “perpetual freedom...exempt from every bishop’s power”.²²⁹ This grant of immunity from episcopal control is generally regarded as proof of the charter being a forgery intended to aid the monastery in its struggle against the bishops of East Anglia in the later eleventh century.²³⁰ But as with the Edmund charter, a genuine grant may have lain at the heart of the later forgery and Harmer suggests that the grant of fish may have been copied from a genuine charter of Cnut.²³¹ The fortunes of the community centred around St. Edmund, along with his cult, appear to have undergone a significant upswing in the 1020s. A new church was constructed and consecrated in the name of SS Mary and Edmund in 1028²³² and Edmund appears in a number of liturgical calendars.²³³ During the middle decades of the eleventh century the monastery, and with it presumably the cult, continued to flourish under the royal patronage of Edward the Confessor, who made significant land grants to the monastery²³⁴ and who seemed to hold a special affection for Edmund, regarding him as his kinsman

²²⁶ “...monasterium quod situm est in loco qui dicitur Bedericeswirthe...”, Hervey, *Corolla Sancti Eadmundi*, p. 589

²²⁷ The Electronic Sawyer, Online catalogue of Anglo-Saxon charters, <http://www.esawyer.org.uk/manuscript/753.html>, accessed on 02.03.15

²²⁸ Hervey, *Corolla*. p. 597

²²⁹ *Ibid*

²³⁰ Gransden, *Legends and traditions*, p. 10

²³¹ Harmer, F.E., *Anglo-Saxon Writs*, (Manchester, 1952), pp.140-141

²³² Arnold, *Memorials*, p. 342

²³³ Christ Church, Canterbury and New Minster, Winchester; Gransden, *Legends and Traditions*, p. 11

²³⁴ “...and I give you to know that I will that the soke of the eight and a half hundred as assembled at Thingoe belong to Saint Edmund, with sac and soke, as fully and freely as my mother possessed it.”; Hervey, *Corolla*, p. 611

(*mines meges*²³⁵). It is surely in this period that Edmund came to be regarded as England's patron saint, a position he was to relinquish partly to Edward himself in the twelfth century. He is certainly described in such terms in William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*: "St. Edmund...won the guerdon of praise for being the first of the saints of his country".²³⁶

The on-going debate regarding the impact of the Norman Conquest on the fortunes and the continued survival of Anglo-Saxon saints and their attendant cults is of little relevance in the case of Edmund, since his position as one of the foremost saints of the newly conquered kingdom ensured not only his continued survival, but also the enthusiastic patronage of the new colonising elite²³⁷ in a manner (and with a motivation) perhaps similar to that adopted by the Danish invaders some two centuries earlier. That is not to say, however, that the monastery's history and fortunes were similar to those of others housing major Anglo-Saxon cults. The appointment of Baldwin to the abbacy in 1065 was, as the only non-Englishman to hold the rank of abbot in the year of the Conquest, unique in an English context, but proved to be extremely fortuitous for the abbey. Baldwin's intimate entanglement in his role as physician with first Edward the Confessor and, following the Conquest, William the Conqueror and Archbishop Lanfranc,²³⁸ gave him unrivalled access to the ear of the secular and ecclesiastical elite. Baldwin was a native of Chartres²³⁹ and a monk at the abbey of Saint-Denis²⁴⁰ and therefore, it has to be assumed, acceptable to both the Anglo-Saxon monks at the abbey, as well as to the new Norman elite, being an alien to both. Apart from his cultural and ethnic suitability he was without doubt an immensely skilled administrator and political operator. Under his stewardship the abbey, far from suffering from the incursions and depredations visited on many other

²³⁵ Ibid, p. 602

²³⁶ ...qui quasi rex et princeps patriae compatriotarum sanctorum primus palmam laudis uendicaret, Winterbottom, M. & Thomson, R. M., trans., eds., *William of Malmesbury, Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, 2vols, (Oxford, 2007), pp. 242-243

²³⁷ For studies on the impact of the Norman conquest on Anglo-Saxon saints see Cownie, E., *Religious Patronage in Anglo-Norman England, 1066-1135*, (Woodbridge, 1998), ²³⁷ Rubenstein, 'Liturgy against History', p. 279-309 & Ridyard, 'Condigna veneratio', pp. 179-206

²³⁸ Bates, D., *The Abbey and the Norman Conquest: An unusual case?* In Licence, T., ed., *Bury St. Edmunds and the Norman Conquest*, (Woodbridge, 2014), pp. 5-22, p. 6

²³⁹ Page, W., ed., *A History of the County of Suffolk*, Volume 2, (London, 1911), p. 56

²⁴⁰ Bates, D., *The Abbey and the Norman Conquest*, p. 5

monastic institutions in the wake of the Conquest, attracted a great deal in the way of donations and patronage, most importantly that of the Conqueror. It was also thanks to Baldwin's efforts that the monastery was able to resist the plans of first Herfast and later Herbert Losinga to move the seat of the East Anglian see to Bury St. Edmunds.²⁴¹

It is in this context not necessary closely to trace and follow the subsequent political and economic history of the monastery at Bury St. Edmunds in all its twists and turns, except on those occasions when those events clearly impacted on the cult of St. Edmund. Suffice it to say that for the majority of the period from the conquest to its dissolution in 1539, Bury was undoubtedly one of the richest (although not always one of the most solvent) and most influential Benedictine monasteries in the country. In the 1291 *Taxatio* it was assessed at nearly £1000 total value (that is to say combined income from temporalities, spiritualities and offerings to the shrine of St. Edmund)²⁴² and in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* for 1535 its gross income was assessed at £2336.²⁴³

4.2. Lives of St. Edmund

The most important sources of evidence in tracing the cult of St. Edmund at Bury from the conquest to the dissolution are various hagiographies. The first post-conquest hagiography, and following in the footsteps of the already mentioned *Passio of Abbo of Fleury*, is the collection of miracles compiled by Herman the Archdeacon in the closing years of the 11th century,²⁴⁴ followed almost immediately by the re-writing (and the addition of several new miracles) to this collection, most likely carried out by Goscelin of Saint Bertin.²⁴⁵ The next major step in the developing narrative of St. Edmund is Geoffrey of Wells' *De infantia sancti Eadmundi*,²⁴⁶ most likely produced at Thetford between 1150 and 1156.²⁴⁷ Far from being a continuation of the existing texts it introduced an entirely

²⁴¹ Gransden, *Legends and traditions*, p. 8, see also Arnold, *Memorials*, pp. 344-347 for the papal bull and William's charter of exemption from episcopal control

²⁴² Page, W., *History of Suffolk: Volume 2*, p. 65

²⁴³ Knowles, D., *The Religious Orders in England: Volume III The Tudor Age*, (Cambridge, 1959), p. 473

²⁴⁴ Licence, *Herman the Archdeacon*, p. lix

²⁴⁵ Ibid, pp. cxiv - cxxvii

²⁴⁶ Thomson, R. M., ed., 'Geoffrey of Wells: Liber de infantia Sancti Eadmundi', *Analecta Bollandiana* 95 (1977), pp. 34-42

²⁴⁷ Pinner, *St. Edmund, King and Martyr: Constructing his cult in Medieval East Anglia*, PhD thesis (UEA, 2010), p. 121

new perspective to St. Edmund's life, namely his childhood and ascension to the throne of East Anglia. The text appears to have been intended as a prequel to Abbo's *Passio*, ending with the Danes preparing for an invasion of England. Sometime during the last two decades of the twelfth century, an Anglo-Norman verse life of Edmund, *La Vie seint Edmund le Rei* by "Denis Piramus", was produced at Bury.²⁴⁸ The poem does not add any new material to Edmund's legend and "Denis Piramus" relies on Abbo's *Passio*, Geoffrey of Wells' *De Infantia* and Herman's *De Miraculis* for his account of the legend.²⁴⁹ Another Anglo-Norman verse life, *La Passiun de seint Edmund*,²⁵⁰ was composed around the turn of the thirteenth century; the poem is anonymous, but based on internal evidence a good case for a link to Bury St. Edmunds can be made.²⁵¹ The poem relies exclusively on Abbo's *Passio* for its source material and ignores the works of Herman and Geoffrey of Wells, although, accepting the assertion that the author was familiar with the abbey, it seems unlikely that he was unaware of the existence of those works. The third versified life of Edmund, this time in Anglo-Latin, is the *Vita Sancti Eadmundi*²⁵² composed by Henry of Avranches. This poem again primarily draws on Abbo for its source material, although a number of details from *De Miraculis* (in its later recension by Goscelin) and *De Infantia* are present. The *Vita Sancti Eadmundi* is dated to around 1220 and both Riggs and Townsend suggest that it was composed for Bury St. Edmunds abbey.²⁵³ Yet another revision of the *De Miraculis*, produced at Bury St. Edmunds around the year 1200 and generally attributed to Osbert of Clare and abbot Sampson continues the account of miracles worked by St. Edmund. During the last quarter of the fourteenth century a hagiographic compendium was produced at Bury,²⁵⁴ including Tynemouth's *Historia Aurea*, various other *vitae* of predominantly English saints and a *Vita et Passio cum Miraculis Sancti*

²⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 126

²⁴⁹ Kjellman, H., ed., *La Vie Seint Edmund le Rei: Poème Anglo-Norman du XI^e siècle par Denis Pyramus*, (Göteborg, 1935), pp. xiii-xxiii

²⁵⁰ Grant, J., ed., *La Passiun de seint Edmund*, (London, 1978)

²⁵¹ Pinner, *St. Edmund*, p. 130

²⁵² Townsend, D., 'The Vita Sancti Eadmundi of Henry of Avranches', *Journal of Medieval Latin* 5 (1995), pp. 95-118

²⁵³ Rigg, A. G., *A History of Anglo-Latin Literature, 1066-1422*, (Cambridge, 1992), p. 182 & Townsend, 'Vita Sancti Eadmundi', pp. 98-9

²⁵⁴ Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 240

Edmundi.²⁵⁵ This *Vita et Passio* once again draws together the previous accounts of St. Edmund's life and miracles from Abbo, *De Miraculis* and *De Infantia*, augmented by a number of details not known from other sources (such as the names of Edmund's parents and the supposed place of his birth), but its real value to anyone intending to trace St. Edmund's cult through the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries lies in the addition of forty new miracles, the last dating to 1375. The last true *vita* of Edmund to be produced at Bury St. Edmunds was also the first to be written in English. John Lydgate's *Lives of Sts Edmund and Fremund* was commissioned by Abbot Curteys to be given to King Henry VI on the occasion of his stay at the abbey at some time between Christmas 1433 and Easter 1434²⁵⁶ (see figure 24 below). Around the same time two more short, composite lives of St. Edmund were produced at Bury by Abbot Curteys himself and the Kitchener Andrew Astone (*Vita et Passio S. Edmundi Abbreviata* and *Vita et Passio Sancti Edmundi breviter collecta*).²⁵⁷

4.2.1. Abbo of Fleury's *Passio Sancti Edmundi*

Not all these texts can shed equal light on the fortunes of the cult of St. Edmund and the concerns and pre-occupations of the Bury monks regarding their patron. The unspoken assumptions and much of the impetus behind the creations must remain lost, but they can nevertheless reveal a good deal regarding the changing nature of St. Edmund as a protector and a healing saint. To this end a number of these texts will undergo closer scrutiny in what follows to attempt to augment the narrative of the cult of St. Edmund at Bury from the Conquest to the dissolution of the monasteries. It is of course to the account of Abbo of Fleury we must initially turn. His *Passio* is the foundation narrative around which all following accounts revolve. In the writing of his account Abbo was faced with the difficulty of uniting the historical reality of a ninth century Anglo-Saxon king, essentially a regional warlord, with the tropes and templates of saintly behaviour as laid down in a hagiographic tradition stretching back to the third century desert hermits Paul and Anthony. Abbo eschews the historical evidence provided by the Anglo-Saxon

²⁵⁵ Hervey, *Corolla*, pp. 377-408 & Arnold, T., *Memorials of St. Edmund's Abbey, Volume III*, (London, 1896), pp. 318-348

²⁵⁶ Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Article 17238, www.oxforddnb.com, accessed on 24.05.2015

²⁵⁷ Pinner, *St. Edmund*, p. 139

Chronicle, which unambiguously states that Edmund did fight the Danes and was slain either in or following a battle in which the Danes emerged victorious (see above). The fight in Abbo's *Passio* is internalised; it moves from the physical sphere of warfare to an internal battle of endurance in the face of his impending martyrdom.²⁵⁸ Edmund becomes a soldier of Christ, fighting the good fight against the pagan hordes not on the field, but through his steadfastness in the face of death.



Figure 24: British Library Harley MS 2278 6r, detail; Lydgate presents a copy of his work to Henry VI²⁵⁹

Abbo's account of the miracles Edmund worked after his death, however, shows how acutely aware he must have been of the need to provide a saint who did not simply fit the

²⁵⁸ Arnold, *Memorials, Volume I*, p. 15

²⁵⁹ <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/15556>, accessed on 25.05.15

hagiographical mould, but who also was a real, physical protector of his people. Apart from the miracles occurring immediately after his death (i.e. the talking head of Edmund, the wolf guarding the head and the re-joining of his severed head to his body²⁶⁰), Abbo only provides two miracles: the eight thieves prevented from escape and the punishment of Leoftsan.²⁶¹ The narrative of St. Edmund as a protector of his territory and people is not fully developed here, but it is implied in these miracles; Edmund can take care of himself; anyone intent on despoiling his dignity or indeed his possessions will be punished.

Another, more oblique, hint as to the protective nature of St. Edmund is provided by his comparison with St. Lawrence. On the face of it Abbo simply compares Edmund to another martyr saint and seeks to establish the cult of Edmund alongside the great universal cults, such as St. Lawrence's. Geopolitical events of the second half of the tenth century, however, may imply that this comparison is also intended to strengthen his credentials as a protector. In the same way as England was menaced by the depredations of the Danish invasions in the ninth century, continental Europe was menaced by the Magyar hordes for nearly a hundred years until their decisive defeat at the hands of Otto I at the battle of Lechfeld (near Augsburg, Bavaria) in 955. The battle was fought on the 10 August of that year, the feast day of St. Lawrence.²⁶² Thietmar of Merseburg records that Otto I vowed to establish a bishopric in Merseburg in honour of St. Lawrence,²⁶³ should he be granted victory. St. Lawrence seems indeed to have been credited with the victory as churches throughout Bavaria were re-dedicated in honour of St. Lawrence in the aftermath of the battle.²⁶⁴ A decade and a half after the battle, a papal document formally credited the victory at the Battle of Lechfeld to the intercession of St. Lawrence.²⁶⁵ Abbo of Fleury would certainly have been aware of the battle and the stories surrounding the

²⁶⁰ Ibid, pp. 18-19

²⁶¹ Ibid, pp. 21-23

²⁶² Bowlus, C. R., *The Battle of Lechfeld and its Aftermath, August 955: The End of the Age of Migrations in the Latin West*, (Aldershot, 2006), p. 155

²⁶³ *Postera die, id est in festivitate Christi martyris Laurentii, rex, solum se prae caeteris culpabilem Deo professus atque prostratus, hoc fecit lacrimis votum profusis: si Christus dignaretur sibi eo die tanti intercessione preconis dare victoriam et vitam, ut in civitate Merseburgensi episcopatum in honore victoris ignium construere domumque suimet magnam noviter inceptam sibi ad aecclesiam vellet aedificare.*

Holtzmann, R., *Die Chronik des Bischofs Thietmar von Merseburg und Ihre Korveier Überarbeitung*, (Berlin, 1935), p. 48

²⁶⁴ Bachrach, D. S., *Warfare in Tenth-Century Germany*, (Woodbridge, 2012), p. 190

²⁶⁵ Bowlus, *The Battle of Lechfeld*, p. 156

famous victory and may have chosen St. Lawrence deliberately to elicit favourable comparisons in his readers minds between the saint who could stop the barbaric hordes from the east to St. Edmund, who, whilst having failed to achieve the same with the hordes from the north during his lifetime, might equally become a protector on this scale posthumously; especially since the threat of such invasions was once again increasing to acute levels during the time Abbo wrote his *Passio*.

4.2.2. Herman the Archdeacon's *De Miraculis*

The development of the 'protector narrative' of St. Edmund was moved forward by Herman's *De Miraculis*. Herman records thirty-eight distinct miracles,²⁶⁶ which can be broken down into easily distinguishable types. Eleven accounts deal with punitive miracles, ranging in severity from temporary debilitation all the way to death. Twelve miracles can be categorised as curative, with the healing of blindness and paralysis accounting for all but three of these. Two concern rescues at sea, and all the rest can be described as miscellaneous manifestations of St. Edmund's power (see figure 25). More than a quarter of the miracles are therefore concerned specifically with St. Edmund's power, as already seen in Abbo's *Passio*, to avenge wrongs done specifically to himself, as in the miracle concerning the royal servant Osgod Clapa, who was temporarily driven mad for his insolence in entering the vicinity of the shrine drunk and armed.²⁶⁷ Moreover St. Edmund also now turned his attentions to those seeking to harm his 'servants', i.e. the monks of Bury, as evidenced in the fate of Robert de Curnun and his henchmen, who attempted to alienate some of the possessions of the abbey and were again, either temporarily or permanently, driven mad.²⁶⁸ St. Edmund's concern does not solely rest on the monks of Bury, but includes the general populace, who derive benefits as various as

²⁶⁶ In this study distinct miracles occurring under the same chapter heading in Herman's collection are counted separately and while miracles with a distinct two-fold narrative (i.e. the miracle of the Dane who is blinded, but healed again after repenting of his misdeeds, Licence, *Herman the Archdeacon*, p.: 37) are only counted as one miracle for the purposes of establishing the sample size, they are counted doubly (i.e. as a punitive and a curative miracle) in the calculation of the percentages of different types of miracles (see figures 25 and 27).

²⁶⁷ Licence, *Herman the Archdeacon*, p. 57

²⁶⁸ Ibid, pp. 101-103, see also Yarrow, S., *Saints and their Communites*, (Oxford, 2006), pp. 22-62 for the development of this particular strand of the miracle narratives of St. Edmund, and the strained relationship between successive bishops of Norwich and the abbey.

the ability to resist the payment of a tribute imposed by Swein,²⁶⁹ to rain in times of an imminent draught.²⁷⁰ According to Herman St. Edmund was not content with the protection of only 'his' people, i.e. the inhabitants of Bury St. Edmunds and the abbey lands in particular and the population of East Anglia in general, but sought to exert his protection over the entire kingdom (most notably in the slaying of Swein²⁷¹). Read in this light the impression is almost one of concentric circles of protection radiating outwards from St. Edmund's resting place over the abbey, the banleuca, the abbey's possessions, the ancient Kingdom of East Anglia and finally the whole of England. The curative powers of St. Edmund are present in this miracle collection, but, as a simplified percentile breakdown shows (see figure 25) they only account for 30 per cent of the entire collection.

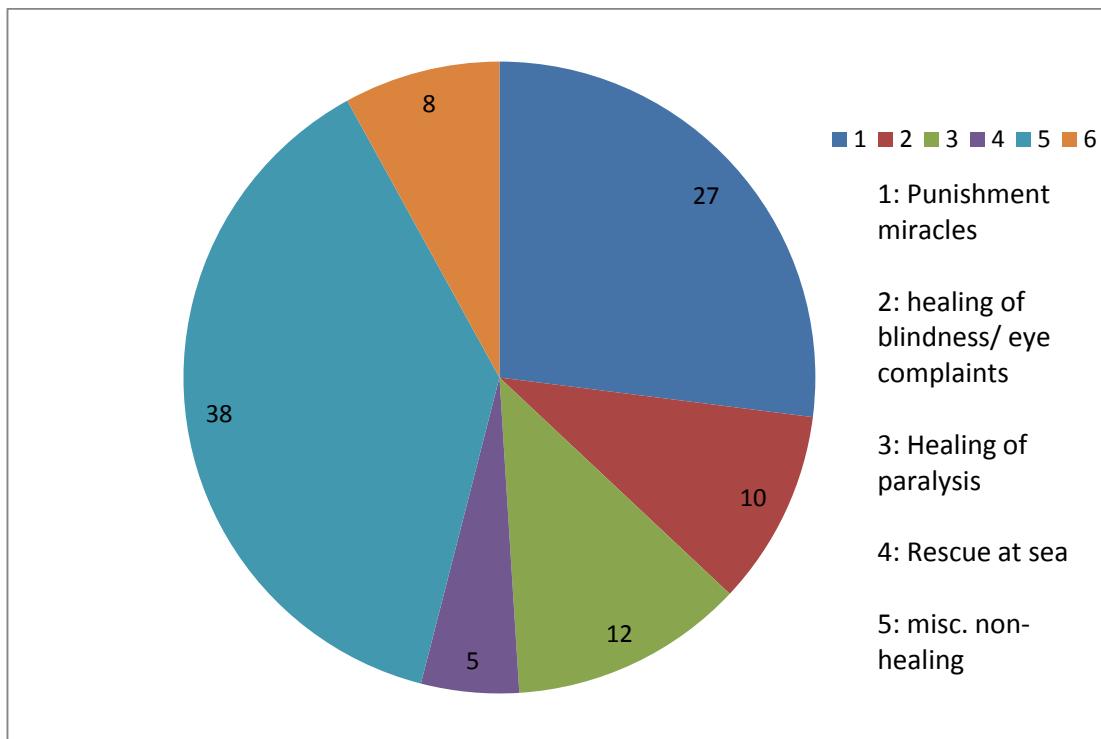


Figure 25: Breakdown by type of the miracles reported in Herman's *De Miraculis*
(calculated in percentages)²⁷²

²⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 17

²⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 121

²⁷¹ Ibid, p. 23

²⁷² Graph by author from data in Licence, *Herman the Archdeacon*

As a general rule it can be stated that the later a miracle collection was compiled the more curative miracles it is likely to contain, there certainly being a general trend towards curative miracles as the medieval period progressed. But Herman's collection does still represent somewhat of an anomaly in its pre-occupations. Herman's overriding concerns, both in terms of curative and punitive miracles seem to be with blindness and other conditions of the eyes, paralysis and madness (42 per cent of the punitive miracles narratives send one or more individuals mad, see figure 27). How far this is due to a desire to portray a certain specialisation in St. Edmund's powers or is simply an expression of Herman's own predilections it is impossible to say.

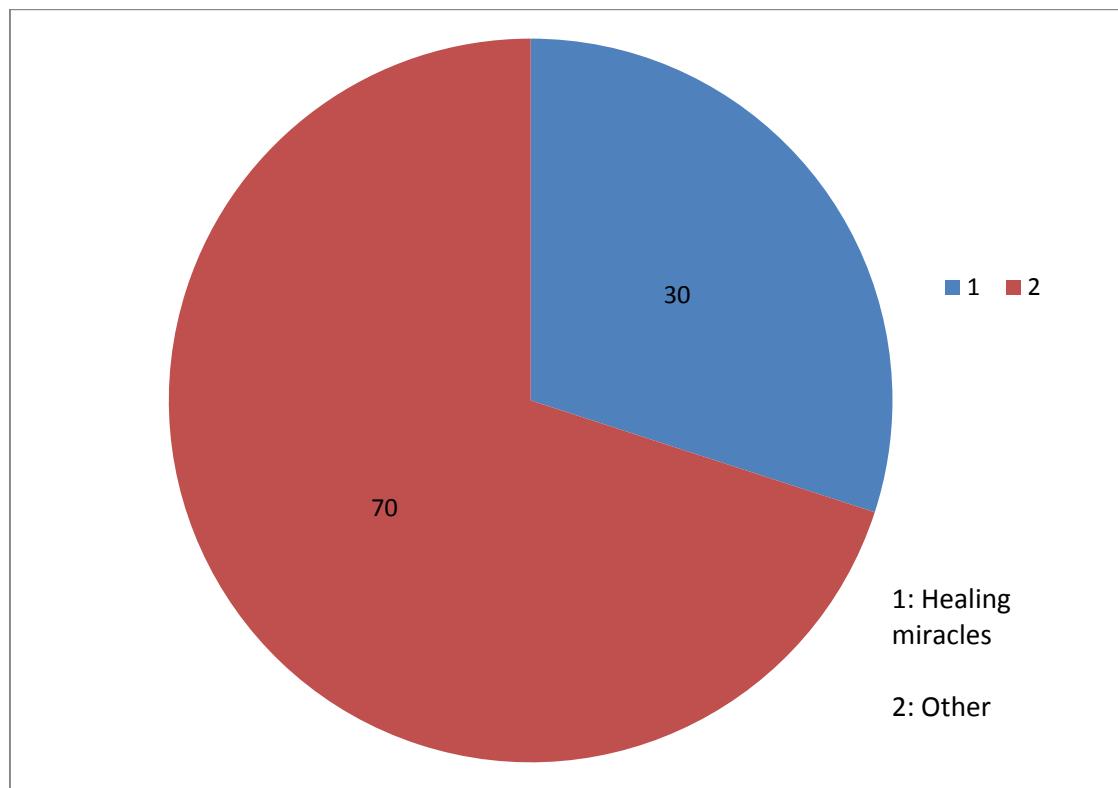


Figure 26: Simplified breakdown of the miracles of Herman's *De Miraculis* (calculated in percentages)²⁷³

²⁷³ Ibid

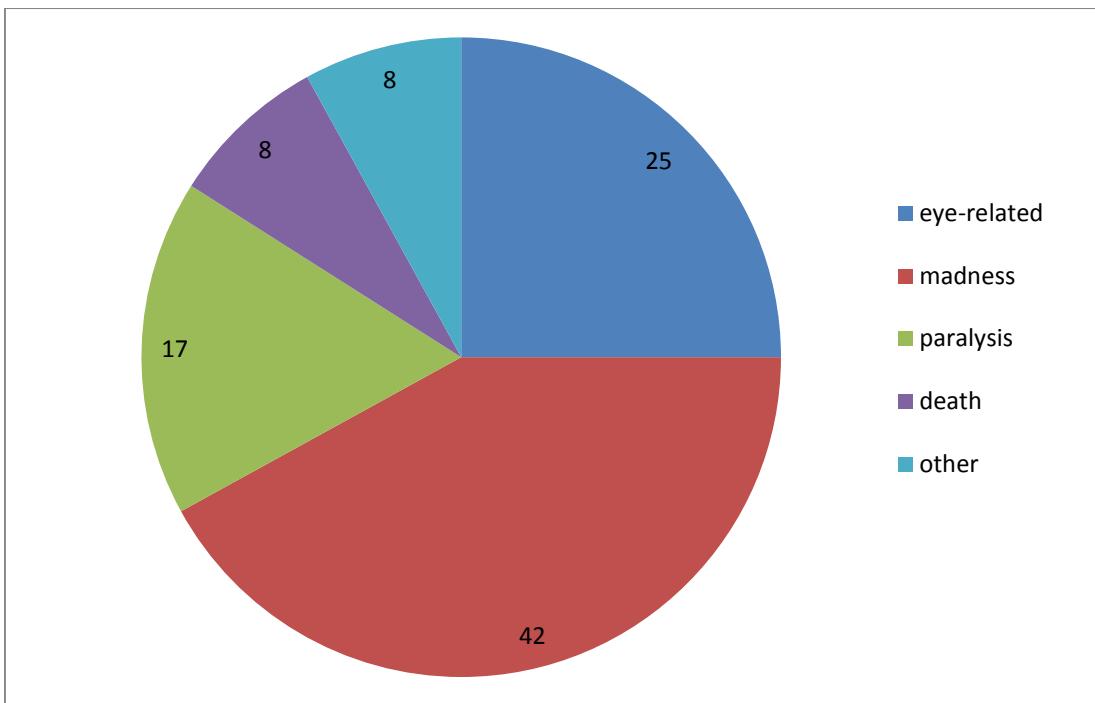


Figure 27: Breakdown by type of the punitive miracles in the *De Miraculis* (calculated in percentages)²⁷⁴

4.2.3. Goscelin of St. Bertin's *De Miraculis*

The editing and re-writing of the *De Miraculis* by Goscelin of Saint-Bertin most likely occurred in 1099/1100.²⁷⁵ As Licence points out,²⁷⁶ it may have been commissioned by Herbert Losinga during the time when he administered the abbey due to a prolonged abbatial vacancy. According to the prologue Goscelin aimed to re-write the miracles in a simpler and more 'truthful'²⁷⁷ way and criticises the love for "tangled bundles of syllogisms...[and] contriv[ed] witicims"²⁷⁸ shown by other historians. Although Herman is not specifically mentioned, there can be no doubt that this rebuttal refers to him. Goscelin's version is however not merely a stylistic re-write; he also substantially alters the content of the *De Miraculis*. Twenty nine of the miracles are the same as are recorded

²⁷⁴ Ibid

²⁷⁵ For a detailed discussion on the date of composition and authorship of this version of the *De Miraculis* see Licence, *Herman the Archdeacon*, pp. cix-cxxvii

²⁷⁶ Ibid, pp. cxi-cxiv

²⁷⁷ Goscelin uses the adjective *sincero*, which could also be read as pure or genuine. Ibid, p. 129

²⁷⁸ Ibid

in Herman's work; two others can also be attributed to him.²⁷⁹ Nine miracles are entirely new to the collection and a further nine are omitted from Goscelin's collection. The editorial decisions taken by Goscelin in respect to which miracles to add and which to omit make for rather interesting reading, both in regards to the development of the narrative of the cult of St. Edmund and Goscelin's, and perhaps by extension his patron's, concerns about some of the miracles reported by Herman. Among the omitted miracles is that of the punishment of bishop Herfast, a lengthy narrative concerning Herfast's attack on the abbey at Bury St. Edmunds and his subsequent punishment by means of a divinely deployed tree branch that strikes the bishop in the eye and "plung[es] the man into paroxysms of agony as both eyes are changed into a well of spurting blood".²⁸⁰ If Herbert Losinga was the instigator of Goscelin's re-working of Herman's miracles, this particular story may have seemed rather too close to Herbert's own situation regarding the abbey at Bury St. Edmunds and therefore needed jettisoning. Also omitted from Goscelin's version were two further punitive miracles, both concerning Norman courtiers. The first of these is similar to the above mentioned account of Robert of Curncun, inasmuch as once again abbey property is in danger of being alienated and St. Edmund steps in to punish the perpetrator. In this account however²⁸¹ redemption is denied the courtier, whose gift of a candle is rejected by St. Edmund and who is afflicted with his divinely ordained ailment for the remainder of his life. It does not seem that Goscelin wished to purge the punitive elements from the narrative of St. Edmund's miracles (see figure 28), as he adds two punishment miracles of his own, but that he instead may have wanted to refine this particular element of Edmund's cult. The impression given is that the rather vituperative nature of some of Herman's miracles is here softened somewhat and the possibility of redemption and forgiveness, if sought, is offered, rather than withdrawn. This becomes especially apparent in a series of miracles towards the end of Goscelin's collections concerning Toli the sacrist.²⁸² Toli, along with three others, doubted the incorrupt nature of the body of St. Edmund and handled his remains to satisfy his curiosity. As punishment for their temerity and lack of reverence Toli's companions "were struck with lethal

²⁷⁹ See 'The Missing Miracles' in Licence, *Herman the Archdeacon*, pp. 337-349

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.73

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 64-67

²⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 278-287

ailments”²⁸³ and died soon thereafter. Toli, who seems to have regretted his transgression bitterly, was equally struck down (he fell from the church wall, but a beam arrested his fall) and while he did not escape death, he was granted the mercy of receiving the last rites and dying absolved.

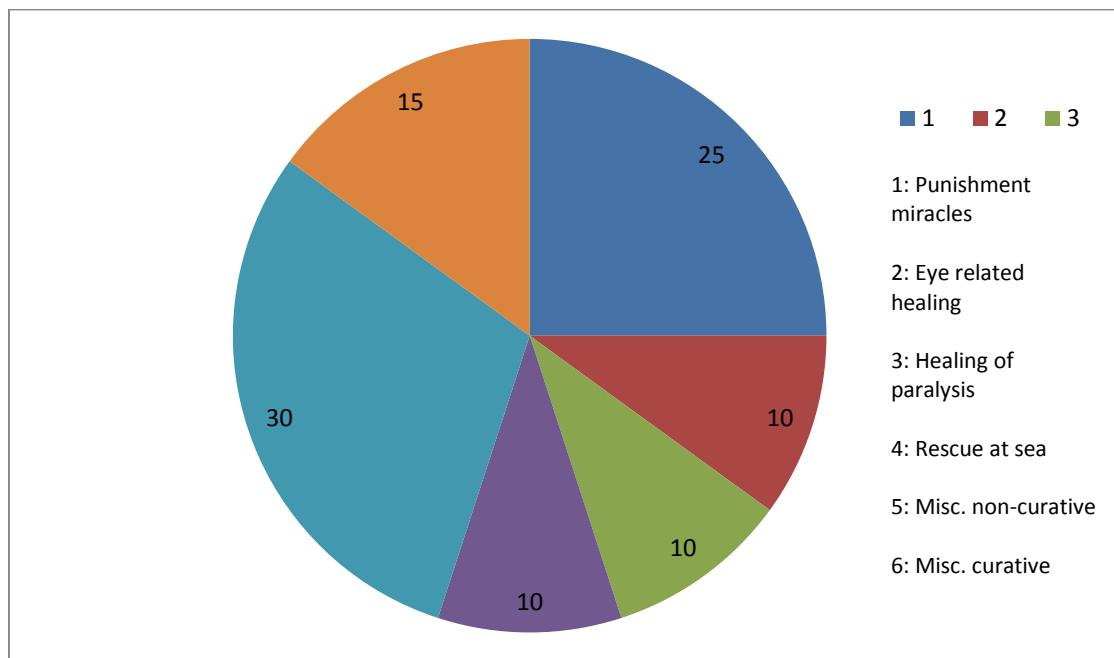


Figure 28: Breakdown by type of the miracles reported in Goscelin’s *De Miraculis*
(calculated in percentages, colours are assigned as in figure 25 above)²⁸⁴

Moreover Toli appears to different individuals in a series of visions, initially bemoaning his purgatorial sufferings, but eventually revealing that through “the holy Redeemer’s mercy and indeed that...of King Edmund”²⁸⁵ he had been forgiven. There is a slight shift in emphasis towards curative miracles, which make up 35 percent of all miracles in this collection, as compared to 30 percent in Herman’s work. The last two miracles in Goscelin’s work concern individuals delivered from shipwreck through the intervention of St. Edmund and may perhaps again be read as a refinement of a narrative begun by Herman: St. Edmund is now not only the divine protector of England, but his powers

²⁸³ Ibid, p. 283

²⁸⁴ Graph by author from data in Licence, *Herman the Archdeacon*

²⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 287

stretch even across its borders and into the seas beyond. As Abbo compared St. Edmund to St. Lawrence, with perhaps an eye to harness the latter's martial prowess to Edmund's cult so Goscelin in one of these miracles compares him to St. Nicholas, the patron saint of sailors. Indeed it is the abbot of St. Nicholas' abbey in Angers himself, who in it invokes St. Edmund for a safe crossing.²⁸⁶ Finally it must be mentioned that Herman, Edmund's erstwhile champion, himself is the protagonist of one of the miracles narrated by Goscelin and that he falls prey to the same shortcoming he repeatedly warned of in his miracles, namely withholding due reference to St. Edmund. Herman handled some of the contact relics of Edmund without care and allowed some of the blood that still adhered to the martyr's shirt to fall to the ground and perish; a crime for which he was punished by death. Toli, the abovementioned sacrist, appeared to a monk in a vision and clearly spelled out the message to be taken from this and similar miracles in Goscelin's collection, namely that Edmund was a jealous and irascible patron, who did not let any slight go unpunished, but who equally could be pacified by "performing suitable penance".²⁸⁷

4.2.4. Geoffrey of Wells' *De Infantia Sancti Eadmundi*

Geoffrey of Wells' *De Infantia Sancti Eadmundi*, conceived as a prequel to Abbo's *Passio* seems to be the only one of its kind in the entire corpus of English hagiographical writing.²⁸⁸ This uniqueness makes it necessary to probe a little into the circumstances and motivations behind its inception. Geoffrey of Wells' own testimony states that he was urged to write by prior Sithric and sub-prior Gocelin²⁸⁹ and that the narratives in his text were obtained from the brethren of the abbey and through others from word of mouth.²⁹⁰ As Pinner points out, the *De Infantia* differs from its predecessors in being presented as the distillation and codification of commonly told narratives and not the "precious repositor[y] of rare knowledge"²⁹¹ that is the *Passio* or the *De Miraculis*. The inference to be drawn from this is of course, that as St. Edmund's fame had grown, the

²⁸⁶ Ibid, pp. 298-303

²⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 295

²⁸⁸ Hayward, P. A., *Geoffrey of Wells' Liber de infantia sancti Eadmundi and the 'Anarchy' of King Stephen's reign*, p. 67, in Bale, A., ed., *St. Edmund, King and Martyr: Changing Images of a Medieval Saint*, (Woodbridge, 2009), pp. 63-86

²⁸⁹ Arnold, *Memorials, Volume I*, p. 94

²⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 93

²⁹¹ Pinner, *St. Edmund*, p. 124

role of the hagiographer in Geoffrey's case had changed from that of a guardian of knowledge that was in danger of being forgotten, to that as compiler of the 'official' narrative, more akin to an editor of all the differing, circulating narratives of St. Edmund.

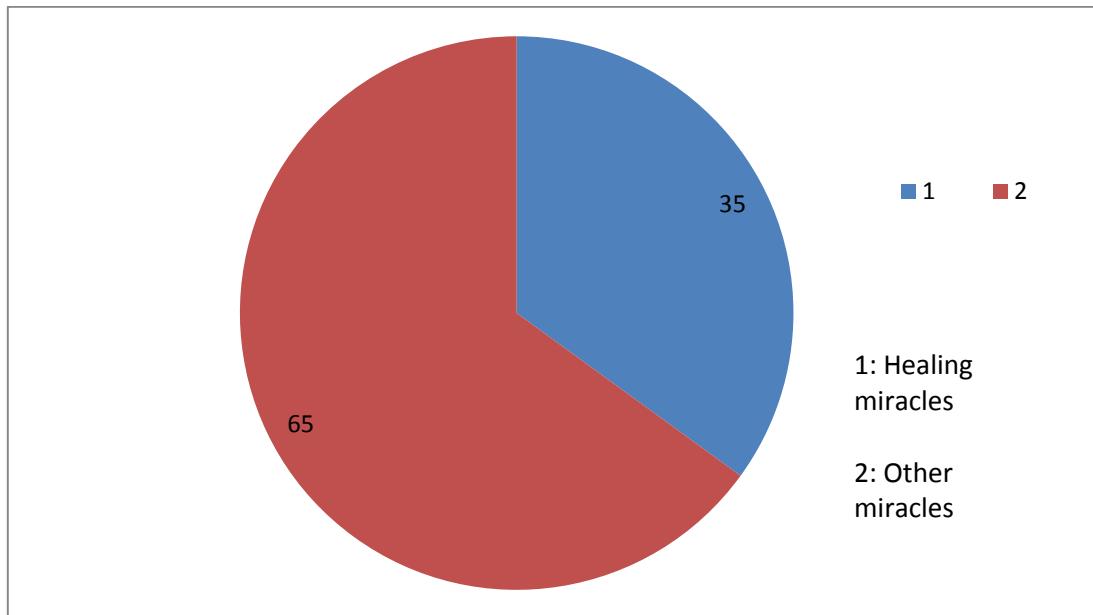


Figure 29: Simplified breakdown of the miracles of Goscelin's *De Miraculis* (given in percentages)²⁹²

The whole narrative of the *De Infantia* rests on the rather peculiar assumption that Edmund was not in fact a native of East Anglia, descended from the royal stock of the ancient kingdom, but instead a continental Saxon, who was invited to accede to the East Anglian throne on the offer of the historically spurious King Offa of East Anglia.²⁹³ Weiss attributes this startling development to the misreading of Abbo's *Passio* by Geoffrey.²⁹⁴ In the passage in which Abbo describes the beginnings of the Kingdom of 'Eastengle'²⁹⁵ he indeed claimed, that "the eastern part of the island...fell to the lot of the Saxons".²⁹⁶ The passage in question is however in no way ambiguous and a misunderstanding of its

²⁹² Graph by author from data in Licence, *Herman the Archdeacon*

²⁹³ Arnold, *Memorials, Volume I*, pp. 94-97

²⁹⁴ Weiss, J., 'East Anglia and the Sea in the Narratives of the Vie de St Edmund and Waldef', p. 104, in Sobecki, S. I., ed., *The Sea and Englishness in the Middle Ages*, (Woodbridge, 2011), pp. 103-112

²⁹⁵ Hervey, *Corolla*, p. 12

²⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 13

intended meaning seems to imply a degree of incompetence and ignorance on Geoffrey's part that seems hard to credit. More likely seems to be Hayward's explanation, that Geoffrey's narrative echoes contemporary political concerns and seeks to make an important point regarding the proper way of royal succession in times of dynastic failure. When Geoffrey completed the *De Infantia* the 'Anarchy of Stephen' was either nearing its end or had indeed come to a very recent close with the coronation of Henry II. If the succession narrative in the *De Infantia*'s main *raison d'être* is indeed to function as political commentary on, or indeed manual to, a current crisis, then it seems prudent to argue for a composition date either before 1153, or, and this seems the most likely, the period between the death of Eustace (17 August 1153), the son of Stephen, and the death of King Stephen (25 October 1154) himself just over a year later. Read in this light the intended analogy could function in one of two ways: King Offa is analogous to Henry I, who, in the words of Geoffrey's Offa, should have designated a "forceful governor"²⁹⁷ to ensure a smooth succession or King Offa could be analogous to Stephen, who, newly bereft of an heir, should shun the "diabolical poison [of]...evil disagreement"²⁹⁸ and designate "the son of [a] kinsman".²⁹⁹ This latter seems to be the most obvious reading of Offa's speech in the *De Infantia*. Apart from the possibility of the *De Infantia* being as much a response to a contemporary crisis as a work of hagiography, it does undoubtedly add a missing chapter to the corpus of writing on St. Edmund. The vast majority of hagiographies deal with the entirety of their subject's lives, while St. Edmund's was predominantly compiled of posthumous material. It seems likely therefore that the monastic community at Bury St. Edmunds felt that knowledge of their saint was incomplete and the *De Infantia* was commissioned to fill that gap. Ridyard's suggestion that the *De Infantia* was composed as a (somewhat belayed) reaction to the changes in the popularity of indigenous cults brought about by the Norman conquest and that Geoffrey's work was intended to shore up support against Norman scepticism³⁰⁰ undoubtedly has merit, but unless more evidence comes to light suggesting that

²⁹⁷ Hayward, *Geoffrey of Wells*, p. 82

²⁹⁸ Ibid

²⁹⁹ Ibid

³⁰⁰ Ridyard, S. J., *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England: A Study of West Saxon & East Anglian Cults*, (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 226-233

Edmund's cult indeed underwent a downturn in popularity during this period, remains unproved. Geoffrey's work can add but little to our knowledge regarding the popularity of Edmund's cult in the middle of the twelfth century, apart from the inference that there was continued demand for material concerning this saint. Geoffrey also adds yet another layer to the narrative strand running from Abbo to Goscelin of Saint Bertin; by locating his birthplace outside of the British Isles, St. Edmund could now be seen as not just an English Saint, but a truly international figure.

4.2.5. Three verse lives and a chronicle: the evidence for the cult in the later twelfth and early thirteenth centuries

The three verse lives of St. Edmund composed at the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century do not add anything to the cult narrative, since their authors rely entirely on the works of Abbo, Herman, Goscelin and Geoffrey for their source material. Their value lies (certainly in the case of the two Anglo-Norman works) in the implied spread of the written narrative of St. Edmund beyond a monastic readership. It seems likely that all three texts were initially commissioned by the abbots of Bury St. Edmunds predominantly, as Pinner points out,³⁰¹ either to strengthen and invigorate the cult of St. Edmund or, as may have been the case with abbot Hugh de Northwold and Henry of Avranches *Vita Sancti Eadmundi*, to bolster authority and leave an indelible mark on the corpus of literature connected with the abbey's patron saint.³⁰² It seems clear however, that these were not the only motives in commissioning these works, since then they would most likely have been composed along the lines of the preceding Latin *vita*. Their composition in verse form and, in the case of the *Vie seint Edmund le rei* and the *Passiun de seint Edmund*, in the Anglo-Norman vernacular clearly hints at the fact, that their intended use included performance to audiences composed of the secular elite. In the absence of so little other supporting evidence regarding the popularity of the cult of St. Edmund in this period the question remaining is of course whether the commissioning of these works hints at the continued popularity of the cult or the concerted attempts of the revival of a cult that has been in decline. Indications of the

³⁰¹ Pinner, *St. Edmund*, pp. 127-134

³⁰² Ibid, p. 133

state of the cult at Bury St. Edmunds can be gained from Jocelin of Brakelond's *Chronica*. Jocelin's work is both invaluable and tantalisingly obtuse with regards to St. Edmund's shrine; his narrative priorities lie in the chronicling of the deeds of abbot Samson and the many and convoluted disputes concerning property, jurisdiction and the appointment of obedientiaries at the abbey. In the opening chapters of his *Chronica* he however details the serious financial difficulties faced by the abbey prior to the election of abbot Samson and the debt accrued by the previous abbot and his obedientiaries, which according to Jocelin ran to the astonishing sum of £3052 and one mark.³⁰³ This necessitated desperate remedial measures by the monks, which included the possibility of stripping the precious metal off the shrine of St. Edmund.³⁰⁴ This may hint at a waning of the popularity of St. Edmund's shrine, since the monks apparently thought that the raw materials more valuable than the continued presence of a splendidly adorned shrine, but in itself is obviously not conclusive. The same measure was apparently again discussed, this time at the Exchequer, during the period of King Richard's imprisonment at the hands of the Holy Roman Emperor Henry VI and the stripping of the shrine was only avoided by abbot Samson's invocation of the notoriously ferocious attitude displayed by St. Edmund towards those who despoiled his property.³⁰⁵ To add to the monastery's troubles the shrine was seriously damaged and nearly destroyed by fire in 1198.³⁰⁶ Cumulatively these snippets seem to point to a cult that had passed its apogee and was indeed waning. If it was, then abbot Samson seems to have been determined to reverse this trend and return St. Edmund to greatness. He commissioned the building of a canopy above the shrine³⁰⁷ and in 1198 inspected the body of St. Edmund, confirmed it as being like that "of a man who died that very day"³⁰⁸ and elevated the shrine to give it a more exalted position in the church. It may ultimately also have been Samson who commissioned "Denis Piramus" and the anonymous author of the *Passiun* to compose their works to further promote the shrine. Gransden suggests that Piramus' poem may either have been commissioned,

³⁰³ Greenway, D. & Sayers, J., trans., eds., *Jocelin of Brakelond: Chronicle of the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds*, (Oxford, 1989), p. 28

³⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 6

³⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 86

³⁰⁶ Ibid, pp. 94-98

³⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 86

³⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 101

much like Lydgate's work some two centuries later, as a gift to a visiting King (Henry II, Richard and John all visited the abbey during the likely period of composition of the poem and the abbacy of Samson) or to mark some special event at the abbey.³⁰⁹ It is entirely possible and even likely that at least one of the poems was commissioned to mark the completion of the works done to St. Edmund's shrine in 1198. To return to the question of whether the verse lives of the late twelfth and early thirteenth century present evidence of the continuing popularity or the attempts at a revival it can be concluded that the two Anglo-Norman works must be seen as part of abbot Samson's campaign to reinvigorate the cult of St. Edmund, whereas the *Vita Sancti Eadmundi* may be seen as the full integration of the verse format into the corpus of existing hagiography of St. Edmund at Bury, composed by "the foremost Anglo-Latin poet of the [thirteenth] century,"³¹⁰ Henry of Avranches, an expert hired hand, similar to the commissioning of the 'professional' hagiographer Goscelin of Saint Bertin to write the definitive conventional hagiography a century and a half before.

4.2.6. Abbot Samson and Osbert of Clare

Abbot Samson himself, apart from his patronage of other writers and his enthusiastic building efforts, had a direct influence on the written narrative of the cult of St. Edmund. A composite manuscript, now BL Cotton MS Titus A VIII, besides containing a cartulary of thirteenth and fourteenth century material from Westminster and an abbreviated copy of Abbo's *Passio*, also contains a yet again revised version of the *De Miraculis*. The base for this version was Goscelin's revision of Herman's original text, but, in the case of one miracle, interspersed and appended to this text is a wealth of new material concerning the miracles of St. Edmund. The revision of the *De Miraculis*, including the interjection of one miracle dating to 1168³¹¹ into the earlier narrative and chapter 21 of Book 2, is attributed to abbot Samson.³¹² The bulk of the new material is attributed to Osbert of Clare, prior of Westminster abbey, who found himself exiled from his own abbey and probably spent the majority of his period of exile (c. 1125-1134) at monastic communities

³⁰⁹ Gransden, A., *A History of the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds: 1182-1256*, (Woodbridge, 2007), p. 133

³¹⁰ Rigg, A. G., *A History of Anglo-Latin Literature*, p. 179

³¹¹ Arnold, *Memorials, Volume I*, pp. 148-151

³¹² Arnold, *Memorials, Volume I*, pp. xl-xli, Gransden, *History of the Abbey*, pp. 127-128

in East Anglia.³¹³ It seems likely that he produced his collection of the miracles of St. Edmund during this period of exile. The surviving manuscript of Osbert and Sampson's material can be dated to c. 1200 and was produced at Bury St. Edmunds abbey.³¹⁴ It is yet more evidence of abbot Sampson's desire to revitalise the cult of St. Edmund and proves that Edmund's miracle working abilities had not waned with the passing of a century since the writing of his first miracle collection. The miracles recounted by Osbert and Sampson are interesting, since their topical focus is very different from Herman's collection. Subjecting the miracles to the same calculations as shown in figures 26 and 29 it immediately becomes apparent that the emphasis on the punitive aspects of the miracle working of St. Edmund had been replaced with one stressing his curative powers.

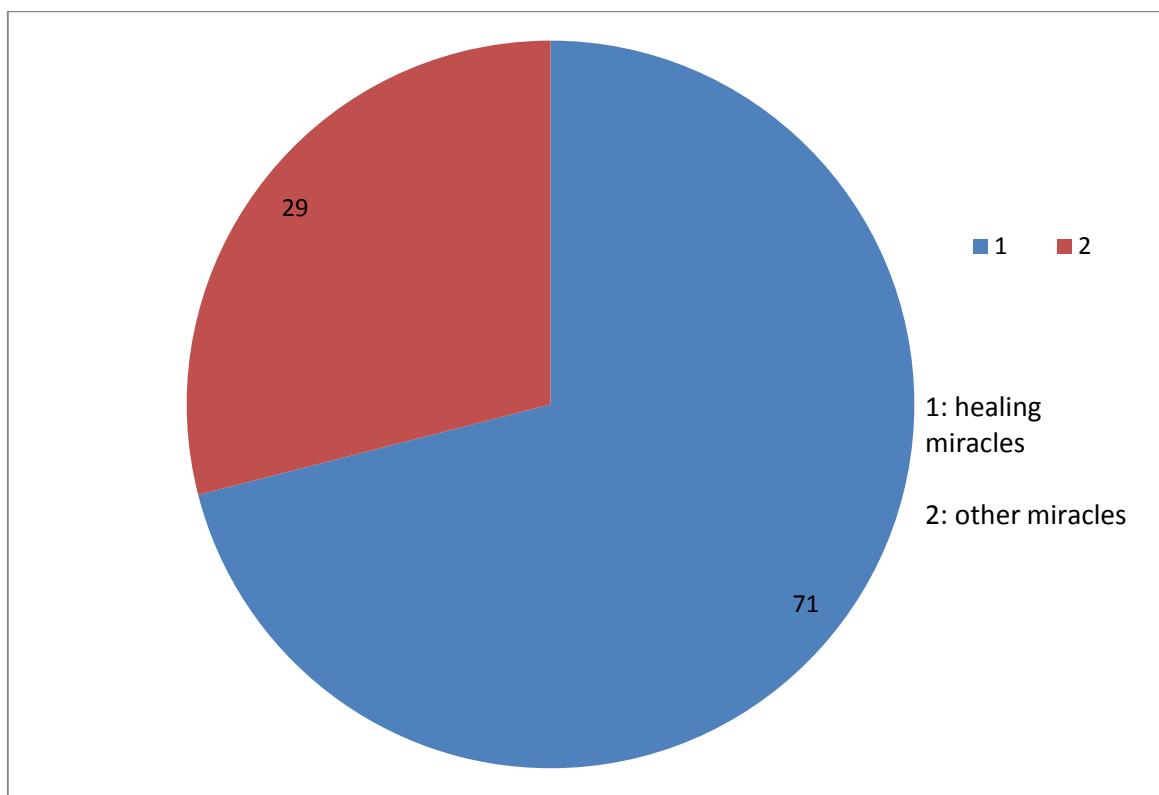


Figure 30: Breakdown of the new miracles included in the *De Miraculis Sancti Aedmundi* (Cotton MS Titus A VIII) by type (given in percentages)³¹⁵

³¹³ Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, www.oxforddnb.com/ article5442, accessed on 15.06.15

³¹⁴ Gransden, *History of the Abbey*, p. 123

³¹⁵ Graph by author from data in Arnold, *Memorials*, Volume I, pp. 107-208

Over seventy per cent of the miracles recounted have a curative aspect, up from just thirty per cent in the case of Herman's version and thirty-five per cent in Goscelin's revision. Indeed, only one new miracle is of a punitive nature and its inclusion can be explained by its close relation to one of the miracles in Herman's collection. It concerns William, successor of Robert the Curcun (see above), whose desire to alienate abbey property seemed as strong as that of his forebear and who suffered the same fate as Robert at the hands of St. Edmund. The overall topoi of the miracles are broadly continued, two miracles concern rescues at sea, a further four sufferers are healed from paralysis and one is healed from blindness.³¹⁶ A new feature of these miracles is the repeated mention of the 'cup of St. Edmund'³¹⁷. Jocelin of Brakelond also mentions this cup in his *Chronica*.³¹⁸ Given the prominent place it occupies in Jocelin's narrative of the near disastrous fire which damaged St. Edmund's shrine in 1198, and the miraculous survival of the cup amongst the cinders of the fire, it must have been a relic of some prominence and reputation certainly by the time Jocelin wrote the *Chronica*, but seemingly as early as the first half of the twelfth century, when Osbert includes it in three miraculous cures. The absence of this cup from either Herman's or Goscelin's version of the *De Miraculis* does of course not prove its absence, but nevertheless may indicate that it is a secondary relic only associated with Edmund's cult at Bury St. Edmunds after the eleventh century, possibly to enhance the curative aspects of the cult, presumably used in much the same way as the 'hand of St. James' at Reading, which also first gained its prominence at around the time Osbert wrote his miracles.

There then follows a lacuna of around a century and a half in terms of new hagiographic material of St. Edmund and his miracles. In the absence of oblation figures from the shrine and records of pilgrim numbers it is difficult to establish, whether this cessation in hagiographical writing echoes developments at the shrine, that is to say a waning of St. Edmunds popularity and his perceived efficacy as a miracle working saint. The abbey itself certainly was beset by a number of troubles, from the continually precarious financial situation, which seemed to have again worsened by the 1230s after the remedial

³¹⁶ Arnold, *Memorials, Volume I*, pp. 179-208

³¹⁷ *scyph[i]...beati martyris*, Arnold, *Memorials, Volume I*, p. 187

³¹⁸ Greenway & Sawyers, *Jocelin*, pp. 95-96

measures taken by abbot Samson had failed to produce a permanent easement and which by the 1290s were “impaired permanently and beyond the possibility of complete recovery”³¹⁹ to the unfortunate involvement of the abbey in the Barons’ War³²⁰ and the long simmering dispute between the town and the abbey, which came to a disastrous climax in 1327.³²¹ It does not, however, necessarily follow that the troubles of the abbey led to trouble for St. Edmund. Despite occasionally strained relations, both Henry III and Edward I showed great and lasting affection for the abbey and its patron. Henry III named his second son Edmund, in honour of the saint³²² and Edward ordered his banner touched by Edmund’s relics before he set out to campaign in Scotland in 1300.³²³ Royal devotion is not always a guarantee for great popularity as the relative failure of the relic of the Holy Blood brought to Westminster Abbey amid great pomp and ceremony in 1247 by Henry III shows,³²⁴ but it can nevertheless be conjectured that any decline in the fortunes of St. Edmund’s cult, assuming it was indeed declining, was gentle rather than precipitous.

4.2.7. New material: The *Vita et Passio cum Miraculis Sancti Edmundi*

The second half of the fourteenth century saw resumption in hagiographical output concerning St. Edmund. The hagiographic compendium³²⁵ most likely assembled by the librarian and later prior of the abbey Henry de Kirkstead during the 1360s and 1370s contains a *Vita et Passio cum Miraculis Sancti Edmundi*.³²⁶ It relies heavily on Abbo, *De Miraculis* and *De Infantia* in its accounts of the life and martyrdom of Edmund, although it augments the information in the *De Infantia* by supplying the names of Edmund’s parents and his birth place (Nuremberg, which contravenes Geoffrey of Wells’ assertion that he came from Saxony). The account of his martyrdom is chiefly notable for the fact that it is

³¹⁹ Galbraith, V. H., ‘The St. Edmundsbury Chronicle 1296-1301’, *English Historical Review* LVIII (1943), pp. 51-78, p. 59

³²⁰ Gransden, A., ed., trans., *The Chronicle of Bury St. Edmunds 1212-1301*, (London, 1964), pp. xxiii-xxv

³²¹ Page, *History of Suffolk*, Volume 2, p. 60

³²² *Alienor regina peperit filium qui ex nomine gloriosi regis et martiris Edmundi Edmundus appellatur*, Gransden, *Chronicle of Bury*, p. 13

³²³ *Post aliquot eciam dies uexillum suum priori et conuentui remandauit supplicibus litteris flagitans quatinus super eundem signum missam de sancto Edmundo celebretur; tunc demum omnium reliquiarum eiusdem loci tactu insigniretur*, *Ibid*, p. 157

³²⁴ Vincent, N., *The Holy Blood: King Henry III and the Westminster Blood Relic*, (Cambridge, 2001), p. 164

³²⁵ Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 240

³²⁶ Pinner, *St. Edmund*, p. 134

inspired by the narrative of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (see above) and sees Edmund engaging in warfare with the Danes.³²⁷ This is the first hagiographical account depicting Edmund in this martial manner. All prior accounts had followed Abbo in his assertion that Edmund had embraced and endured a willing martyrdom. The reason for this deviation from the previously undisputed narrative is not at all clear. It may be that the anonymous scribe of the *Vita et Passio* could not reconcile the evidence, particularly in the *De Miraculis*, of a fearsome protector quick to anger and ferocious in his retribution, with the picture of the meek martyr given in Abbo's *Passio*, but sought to homogenise the portrait of Edmund. The altered narrative and added facts in the *Vita et Passio* certainly seem like an attempt to construct a new and definitive hagiography of St. Edmund, incorporating all the available evidence, not just from the hagiographical, but also from the chronicle tradition.

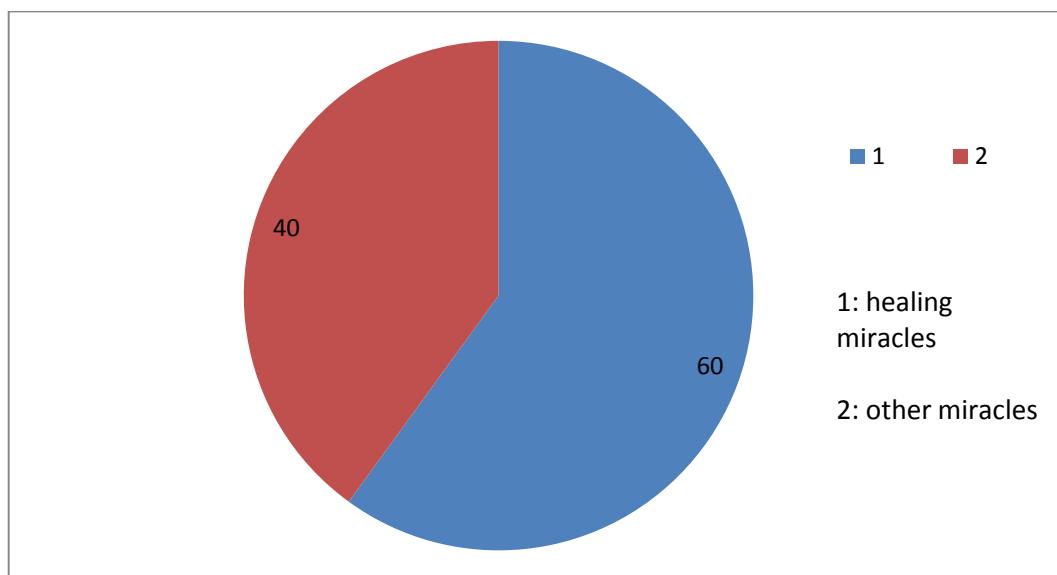


Figure 31: New miracles from MS Bodley 240, *Vita et Passio cum Miraculis Sancti Edmundi* (given in percentages)³²⁸

This is not really surprising given the one hundred and fifty-year hiatus since Henry of Avranches composition of his *Vita Sancti Eadmundi*. It certainly was not done out of a

³²⁷ Hervey, *Corolla*, pp. 397-402

³²⁸ Graph by author from data in Arnold, *Memorials*, Volume III, pp. 318-48

desire to re-emphasise the punitive nature of St. Edmund, since out of the forty new miracles in the *Vita et Passio* only one is punitive whereas twenty-four are of a curative nature (see figure 32). The topoi of the individual miracles remain largely unchanged from the earlier miracle collections. Rescues at sea once again feature prominently, accounting for over 30 per cent of all non-curative miracles in the collection, while within the curative miracles paralysis and blindness once again are the most common ailments healed. The most frequently occurring type of miracle however is, in the context of St. Edmund, a new sub-group: aiding those injured or nearly killed in accidents (see figure 32). Thirteen miracles of this type can be found in this collection, most featuring children either drowned or fallen of a horse. It may be that the compiler of these miracles attempted to portray St. Edmund as a saint that can be called upon *in extremis*, i.e. after a catastrophic accident, or in cases when the intended beneficiary of the miracle is thought beyond help already. In other words, Edmund may be able to help where 'lesser' saints cannot. The overall emphasis on curative miracles first seen in the collection attributed to Osbert and Sampson remains, but is slightly less prominent with only 60 per cent of all miracles being curative as opposed to 71 per cent in the Osbert/Sampson collection. What is most striking however is the changing nature of the beneficiaries of these miracles. Whereas the earlier collections are largely concerned with bishops, monks, courtiers, kings and knights, these miracles almost exclusively benefit those from much lower strata of society. With the exception of the two miracles reported from Athassel, Golden, co. Tipperary in Ireland (see below) they all occurred between 1343 and 1375 and are ordered chronologically within four sections of the text.³²⁹ The first section contains four miracles which occurred between 1343 and 1345, followed by seventeen miracles from the chapel of St. Edmund at Wainfleet St. Mary in Lincolnshire. The abbey owned the island of Salem (or Sailholme), Lincolnshire, with a grange, a saltern and the chapel of St. Edmund and the rights to cut as much peat as they needed from the adjacent fen.³³⁰ The earliest reference for this possession comes from a grant of "Matthew de Preres"³³¹ of circa 1165.

³²⁹ Ibid

³³⁰ Douglas, D. C., *Feudal Documents from the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds*, (Oxford, 1932), p. 173

³³¹ Ibid

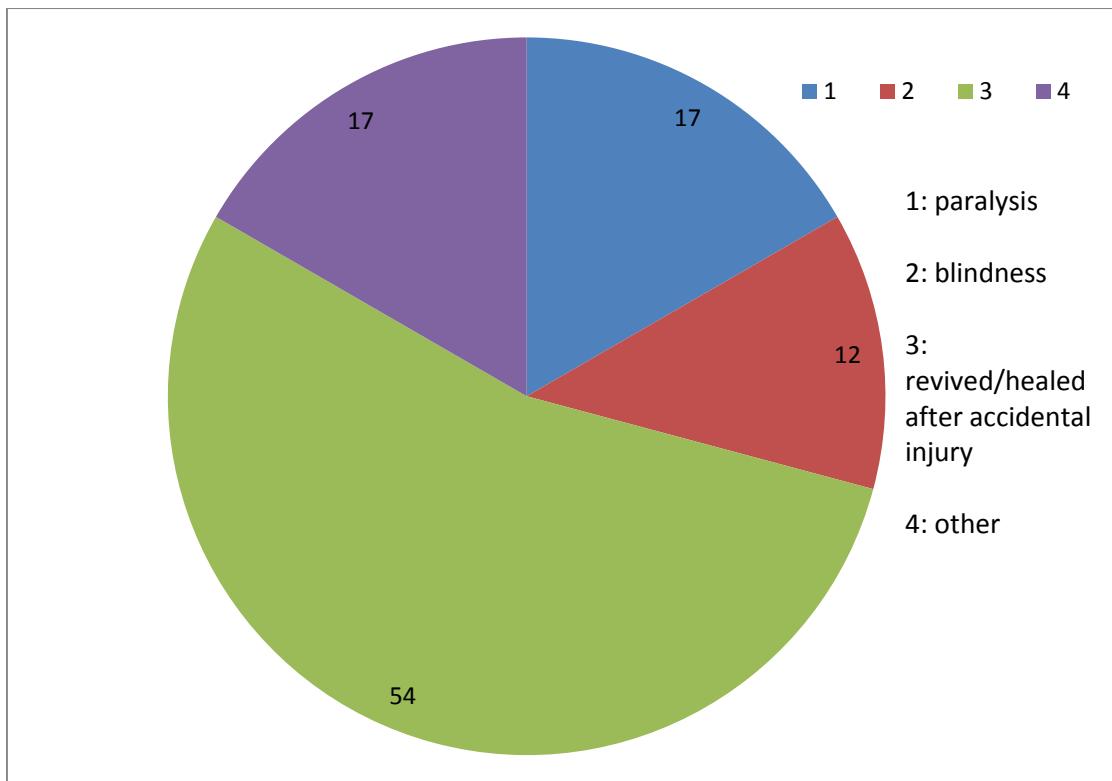


Figure 32: New miracles from MS Bodley 240, *Vita et Passio*, curative miracles, breakdown by type (given in percentages)³³²

Maintenance of the chapel of St. Edmund appears to have declined and no monks were resident there after the mid-thirteenth century,³³³ after which the chapel seems to have fallen into disrepair. Indeed in the first miracle from Wainfleet, St. Edmund appears to an inhabitant of Wainfleet to bemoan the 'ruinous' state of his chapel.³³⁴ The chapel is thereafter duly repaired and miracles once more happen in the area. It seems clear that the primary purpose of this collection of Wainfleet miracles was to generate funds for the repair and upkeep of the chapel. The next section concerns seven miracles worked at the chapel of St. Edmund at Lyng (near East Dereham in Norfolk) between the years 1371 and 1375. The date of the inception of this chapel of St. Edmund at Lyng is not known, but since it formed part of a Benedictine priory, which was moved to Thetford in around

³³² Graph by author from data in Arnold, *Memorials*, Volume III, pp. 318-48

³³³ Lincolnshire HER, Record Number 41760, www.hertitagegateway.org.uk, accessed on 18.06.15

³³⁴ Arnold, *Memorials*, Volume III, pp. 327-328

1176³³⁵ it must certainly have been in use then. There is no obvious connection in terms of landownership or other spheres of interest between this chapel, which at the time the miracles in the Bodley MS were compiled, most likely functioned as a chapel of ease for the village of Easthaugh, and the monks of Bury St. Edmunds. This section of the manuscript does not then have the obvious motivations that are apparent in the miracles concerning Wainfleet, but may simply present yet more evidence of St. Edmund's prowess as a miracle worker; he was not only potent in his primary shrine and others connected to it by the ownership of the monks, but wherever reverence was shown to him. Lyng, like Hoxne, had other, more nebulous and ill-defined connections with St. Edmund. Local legends concerning Edmund abound in the landscape around the chapel; a nearby wood, known as King's Wood (labelled as 'The Grove' on OS maps³³⁶) is, according to local lore, the site of the battle fought by Edmund with the Vikings and within this wood is a boulder, known as St. Edmund's Stone or 'The Great Stone of Lyng', under which treasure (presumably connected to Edmund) is buried, in whose vicinity birds cannot be heard to sing.³³⁷ Local lore is of course a difficult evidential tool, since it cannot, notwithstanding very rare exceptions, be dated. In the case of Lyng, despite the efforts of a number of local historians to claim Edmund, much as Hoxne has done, as one of their own³³⁸ it may simply be a case of the retrospective creation of these legends to fit with the chapel of St. Edmund and the miracles that occurred there. The next section of the text more conventionally has a number of miracles from the vicinity of St. Edmunds shrine at Bury St. Edmunds, the majority of which are again of the type described above, where St. Edmund is invoked after some calamity and death is forestalled or indeed reversed by the saint's merits. The last two miracles in the manuscript share no geographical, topical or temporal connection with the rest of the collection and must again be seen as supplementary evidence for the casting of St. Edmund as a universal, rather than a national or local saint. They purportedly took place at the priory of Athassel in Golden (dedicated to St. Edmund) near Tipperary in Ireland. These miracles are lacking in any real

³³⁵ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 2, p. 89

³³⁶ Grid Reference TG 0799 1703, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/ancientroam/historic>, accessed on 25.06.15

³³⁷ Norfolk Historic Environment Record, Number 3057, Grid Reference TG 0796 1706

<http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/>, accessed on 25.06.15

³³⁸ <http://www.lyngonline.org.uk/st-edmund-and-lyng>, accessed on 25.06.15

detail, no names or dates are given and the second of these is indeed simply a paraphrased rendering of Isaiah 11:6³³⁹ with the miraculous co-habitation of the wood credited to the ‘merits of St. Edmund’. They are clearly remnants of a much older miracle narrative of St. Edmund. Their memory may have endured thanks to a familial East Anglian connection in the shape of William de Burgh, brother of Hubert de Burgh, who founded Athassel Priory.

4.2.8. ‘*Blyssyd Edmund, kyng, martir and vyrgyne*’: John Lydgate’s Lives of SS Edmund & Fremund

The hagiographic climax of the legend of St. Edmund, and indeed his last hagiography, was produced by John Lydgate in Bury St. Edmunds on the occasion of the royal visit of Henry VI to the abbey in 1433. The circumstances of the commissioning and the composition of the poem are clearly set out near its beginning, where Lydgate asserts that “abbot William [William Curteys]…gave me in charge...the noble story to translate...out of the latyn”.³⁴⁰ It is unknown when the finished manuscript was actually given to Henry, but a date in the late 1430s seems likely.³⁴¹ Lydgate clearly continued work on the poem afterwards, since four of the surviving manuscripts³⁴² contain the so-called ‘extra miracles’ of St. Edmund. Lydgate’s primary source in creating his translation was the *vita* present in the above mentioned manuscript Bodley 240, although since he had access to the library at Bury St. Edmunds abbey, his reading may have included any number of the above discussed versions of St. Edmund’s life and miracles. Lydgate’s poem, when considering the cult of St. Edmund from its inception to its end in 1539, is of foremost interest as proof of the cult’s remaining popularity in the middle of the fifteenth century. It is of course always possible that extravagant expenditure on the part of the guardians of a shrine, be it in the form of the commissioning of a new hagiography of its saint or the beautification of the shrine itself, is indicative of a waning in popularity and

³³⁹ *In quadam silva praedicto monasterio vicina pascuntur oves simul cum lupis in magna multitudine, et tamen oves miraculose et meritis sancti Edmundi a lupis omnino non laeduntur*, Arnold, *Memorials, Volume III*, p. 348

³⁴⁰ Bale, A. & Edwards, A. S. G., eds., *John Lydgate’s Lives of SS Edmund & Fremund and the Extra Miracles of St. Edmund*, (Heidelberg, 2009), p. 38

³⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 20

³⁴² Thirteen entire or fragmentary independent manuscripts survive of Lydgate’s poem, *Ibid*, pp. 11-25

that the commissioned works represent an attempt at the re-invigoration of a waning cult. There may be some truth to this argument in the case of Lydgate and St. Edmund, but the decline in popularity must have been fairly gentle rather than in any way precipitous or catastrophic, as a work of such magnitude would hardly have been commissioned as a speculative venture in the hope of reviving a cult in serious decline; it seems more in keeping with a continued policy of updating and rejuvenating a still prospering cult. This reading of the poem is confirmed when one considers the addition of the three new miracles to the text of the poem sometime after the 8th of July 1444 (the date of the third miracle). The miracles conform in type to those most numerous in the miracles of the Bodley 240 manuscript as all three concern children who have encountered potentially fatal misadventure, are thought dead and are revived through the merits of St. Edmund (once a vow is made to the saint).³⁴³ Unlike the earlier Latin miracles of St. Edmund, which especially in the case of the Bodley 240 manuscript, are very sparse and short on detail (save the location and the nature of the miracle), the three miracles narrated by Lydgate are full of local references and have a clear tripartite narrative, in which firstly the recipient children are introduced, they secondly fall prey to their respective accidents and they thirdly are revived through St. Edmund's intercession. The reason for their inclusion into the text is the same as in all the curative miracles recorded hitherto, namely to establish Edmund's standing as a curative saint and to encourage pilgrims to come to his shrine, the difference being that instead of the recording of large numbers of miracles in a rather perfunctory manner, Lydgate chooses to only cite three accounts, but crafts stories that demand far greater emotional and empathic investment.

4.3. Beyond Bury: St. Edmund abroad

Focal points for the veneration of St. Edmund were not restricted to his own *banleuca*. Within the region it spawned a number of secondary sites for pilgrimage (i.e. St. Edmund's chapel at Lyng, the two chapels at Hoxne³⁴⁴, the church of St. Edmund in

³⁴³ Ibid, pp. 134-146

³⁴⁴ See Carey Evans, M., 'The Contribution of Hoxne to the Cult of St. Edmund King and Martyr in the Middle Ages and later', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology & History* XXXVI (1987), pp. 182-195, p.

Norwich, which possessed a secondary relic of Edmund³⁴⁵ and, somewhat further afield, the chapel at Wainfleet in Lincolnshire). At least nineteen churches in the region were dedicated to St. Edmund, with a third of these along the East Anglian coastline from North Lynn to Southwold.³⁴⁶ Aside from the multiple focal points for devotion and pilgrimage in East Anglia, St. Edmund's cult began to spread abroad following the Norman Conquest. Through abbot Baldwin's influence, his cult was established at his former abbey of Saint-Denis, and on a journey to Rome Baldwin gifted some contact relics of the saint to St. Martin's basilica in Lucca.³⁴⁷ Aside from Baldwin's efforts at promulgating the cult in strategically promising locations, it also spread to Europe's northern fringes. Edmund is mentioned in the early twelfth century *Íslendingabók* ('Book of the Icelanders'), whose author references St. Edmund in relation to the first settlement of Iceland: "Iceland was first settled from Norway in the days of Haraldr hárfagri...when Ívarr, the son of Ragnarr loðbrók, had Edmund, the holy king of the English, killed; and that was 870 years after the birth of Christ, according to what is written in his saga."³⁴⁸ The passage is significant in two ways, firstly it establishes the fact that St. Edmund must have been a sufficiently recognisable figure for the intended audience to be referred to in this way, and secondly it establishes an earlier, oral tradition of St. Edmund in connection with the saga of Ragnar Lodbrok. St. Edmund's afterlife and fame in Iceland were not restricted to his status as martyr, but also extended to Icelandic genealogy. In the *Landnámabók* (a thirteenth century history of the settlement of Iceland³⁴⁹) St. Edmund is named as the

187 for evidence of the two focal points for pilgrimage to St. Edmund (one commemorating his martyrdom and the other the miraculous discovery of his head) in the fourteenth century

³⁴⁵ St. Edmund's church held "una pars camisie Sancti Edmundi", Watkin, A., trans., *Archdeaconry of Norwich, Inventory of Church Goods temp. Edward III*, Norfolk Record Society, Volume XIX, Part I, (Norwich, 1947), p. 7

³⁴⁶ This is most likely a reflection on his status as a special protector of seafarers (see Great Yarmouth). Data from www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk and www.heritage.suffolk.gov.uk.

³⁴⁷ The Lucca relics proved to be miracle working and a minor cult was established there; another contact relic was carried as a gift from Baldwin to the abbey of Saint Pierre de Rebaix, Licence, T., 'The cult of St. Edmund' in Licence, T., ed., *Bury St. Edmunds and the Norman Conquest*, (Woodbridge, 2014), pp. 104-130, p. 109

³⁴⁸ Finlay, A., 'Chronology, Genealogy and Conversion: The Afterlife of St Edmund in the North', in Bale, A., ed., *St Edmund, King and Martyr: Changing Images of a Medieval Saint*, (Woodbridge, 2009), pp. 45-62., p. 45

³⁴⁹ The *Landnámabók* was compiled in the twelfth century and is often attributed to the author of the *Íslendingabók*, Ari Thorgilsson), Finlay, *Chronology*, p. 61

father of “Úlfrún the unborn”³⁵⁰ who married Thóldr from whom “are descended many important people in Iceland”.³⁵¹ Finlay suggests that the epithet ‘unborn’ may signify her status as an illegitimate daughter and should be seen as an attempt to rationalize the fact of a daughter being born to a supposedly virginal martyr, although it is unclear why an unacknowledged daughter should be less of a stain on his virginal reputation than any legitimate issue. Edmund’s fame spread eastwards as well as westwards across the Norse sphere of influence. A Cistercian monastery was established by monks from Kirkstead on the island of Hovedøya in Oslo Harbour dedicated to SS Edmund and Mary in 1147, on the site of an earlier church dedicated to St. Edmund, which was thought to be connected to sailors, once again raising the *topoi* of his status as a protector of seafarers.³⁵² A church dedicated to St. Jetmund, and likely of a twelfth century date, stood in the parish of Vanylven in western Norway.³⁵³ The area around St. Jetmund church in Vanylven gave rise to a number of myths connected to Edmund, chief among them the claim that he visited the area and fell asleep on a stone overlooking the village. On waking he pointed out the spot where he wished a church to be erected. The area, as well as the stone, retain their connection to Edmund (see figure 33 below). Dedication to the cult of St. Edmund in this area may also be found in the fact that the first name, Jetmund or Gjetmund, and the patronym Jetmundsen are almost entirely restricted to a couple of districts in this region of western Norway.³⁵⁴ There may also have been a church dedicated to St. Edmund in Oppdal in south-western Norway, although no conclusive evidence for this could be found.³⁵⁵

³⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 60

³⁵¹ Ibid

³⁵² Personal communication with Chris Nyborg, The Norwegian Institute of Local History

³⁵³ The church’s dedication to St. Jetmund (Edmund) is first attested in a charter of 1403 and his cult there seems to have been long lived, with a carved wooden statue of Edmund still remaining in the church in 1766. Personal communication with Professor John Ragnar Myking, Bergen University College

³⁵⁴ A census search for 1910 reveals that 79 out of 88 people with the first name Jetmund or Gjetmund originated in this area. The figure for the proportion of the surname Jetmundsen in the region is equally high with 52 out of 69 people. While this is of course evidence of a most oblique kind, it nevertheless is likely to have preserved the location of a cult centre of Edmund in Norway. Figures derived from <https://www.arkivverket.no/eng/Digitalarkivet>, accessed on 03.07.15

³⁵⁵ Personal communication with Chris Nyborg

4.4. Conclusions

The cult of St. Edmund occupies a special place within the history of pilgrimage in East Anglia. His was without doubt the most popular indigenous cult. The appeal of St. Edmund, in line with what his hagiographers intended, spread beyond the confines off his kingdom to the rest of England and to continental Europe. His cult is attested from the late 9th century until the Dissolution of the monasteries, spanning some 650 years of activity without any noticeable lacunae. As traced above, the narrative of the life, martyrdom and miracle working of Edmund underwent some very noticeable changes, and it is in these changes that one must look for the secret of the longevity of the popularity of Edmund's cult.



Figure 33: St. Edmund's stone (Jetmund Steinen) on St. Edmund's slope (Jetmundleitet), with Vanylven in the background³⁵⁶

The ability of Edmund to fulfil the role of protector saint during the politically, religiously and socially turbulent eleventh century ensured him a favoured position after the Norman

³⁵⁶ Picture from http://kulturminneatlas.avn.no/object/dbarticle_preview.aspx?id=213, accessed on 03.07.15

Conquest and the change of focus in his miracles from the punitive to the curative ensured his continued relevance in the following centuries. His cult proved equally adaptable in terms of the demographic it sought to attract and although there is an undeniable and inevitable downwards trend in the type of pilgrim experiencing miracles at the shrine, from courtiers and bishops to sailors and children, St. Edmund still retained royal favour and a correspondingly high profile. The success of the cult of St. Edmund can of course not be attributed to only one or a handful of factors, but is instead the result of interplay between the success of the abbey of Bury to keep itself involved in high politics, land ownership and literary prowess (thereby furthering and disseminating the cult), the individual hagiographers and poets and their patrons, who seemed to be keenly aware of the alterations and addition to the narrative of Edmund's life and miracles demanded by the passage of time and the inevitable shifts in the public perception of the cult as well as his own unique position as a king, martyr, virgin, and perhaps most importantly, a local. The downswing in his fortune in the hundred years prior to the dissolution of the monasteries as attested by the diminishing income figures at his Hoxne shrines must not be seen as a failure of St. Edmund and his custodians, but is instead part of a wider trend noticeable among many shrines in East Anglia and England.

4.5. Robert of Bury

The other notable, if far less popular, cult to emerge from Bury St. Edmunds is that of the child martyr Robert. Gervase of Canterbury wrote that a boy named Robert was martyred by the town's Jews in 1181 and that miracles were being worked at his tomb.³⁵⁷ The second half of the twelfth and the thirteenth century saw a spate of such ritual child-murder accusations levelled against Jewish communities across England and continental Europe. The earliest and certainly the best documented of these concerned the boy martyr William at Norwich.³⁵⁸ Others emerged from Gloucester and, nearly a century

³⁵⁷ *Martyrizatus est hoc anno ad Pascha apud Sanctum Aedmundum a Judeis puer quidam Robertus nomine, qui in proximo in ecclesia Sancti Aedmundi honorifice sepultus, multis, ut fama fuit, claruit miraculis*, Stubbs, W., ed., *Opera Historica*, Volume I, (London, 1879), p. 296

³⁵⁸ See Norwich Cathedral

later, Lincoln.³⁵⁹ Aside from Gervase of Canterbury's work the cult of Robert is also attested by the Bury historian Jocelin,³⁶⁰ who referred to a now lost *vita* or possibly a collection of miracles worked at Robert's tomb tantalisingly in his *Chronica*. Despite the dearth of detail concerning the genesis of this cult, the mere mention of a hagiographic text so soon after its establishment hints at the fact that the boy-martyr had gained a certain amount of fame and was established as a focus of a miracle working cult within the first two decades of his death. Historians writing about Robert's cult have largely viewed it through the prism of the machinations of ecclesiastical politics, both within the abbey at Bury St. Edmunds and between the abbey and the cathedral priory at Norwich. Hillaby convincingly argues that the cult's development was motivated by Abbot Samson's rivalry with his sacrist William (whose financial entanglement with the town's Jews was a source of conflict between the two men).³⁶¹ Bale argues that the promotion of the cult was equally an attempt to underscore the independence of Bury from the diocese of Norwich (granted in 1175, six years before the supposed murder of Robert) through the creation of its own boy martyr cult.³⁶² This argument rests to some extent on acceptance that the cult of William was indeed worthy of emulation. The widespread popularity of William's cult postulated by Bale³⁶³ rests chiefly on the assertions of his hagiographer Thomas of Monmouth and cannot be taken for granted. The symmetries of the two cases of ritual child murder and their geographic and temporal proximity is of course far too neat to be ascribed to chance and there is no doubt that William's cult had a great deal of influence on that of Robert at Bury. It is equally obvious that in both cases the resident monastic communities were invested in the promotion of the cults and the recording and presumably dissemination of hagiographic material relating to them. It seems that in the case of Norwich the chief motivation for the promotion of such a cult was the attempted

³⁵⁹ See Hillaby, J., 'The ritual child-murder accusation: its dissemination and Harold of Gloucester', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* 34 (1994-96), pp. 69-109 for details of other English medieval blood libel accusations.

³⁶⁰ "It was at this time also that the saintly boy Robert was martyred and was buried in our church: many signs and wonders were performed among the people, as I have recorded elsewhere." Greenway & Sayers, *Jocelin*, p. 15

³⁶¹ The same argument is also made by Bale, see Bale, A., 'House Devil, Town Saint, Anti-Semitism and Hagiography in Medieval Suffolk' in Delany, S., ed., *Chaucer and the Jews, Sources, Contexts, Meanings*, (London, 2002), pp. 185-210

³⁶² Bale, A., *The Jew in the Medieval Book*, (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 108-9

³⁶³ Bale, *House Devil*, p. 186

establishment of a cult of a local martyr saint (possibly in an attempt to emulate the long standing success enjoyed by the monks at Bury with St. Edmund), and that the subsequent boy martyr cults developing at Gloucester and Bury to some extent echo this new trend in indigenous saints' cults. What cannot be established from these arguments however is the extent to which these cults were taken up by local communities. The level of popular support for these supposed martyrs during the early phases of the development of their cults has hitherto gone largely unconsidered. This is of course chiefly due to the absence of any textual evidence (such as feretrarian accounts) which may give any indication as to their popularity, but must also be seen in light of the love of academic historians for true or imagined pattern recognition. In the case of Norwich and Bury, the rivalry of the two monastic institutions, the wrangle for diocesan control of Bury, the dire state of the sacrist's accounts and his need for Jewish financial assistance can all be neatly packaged to explain Robert's cult. The evidence supporting this version of events cannot of course be discarded and may be entirely correct, but it behoves every historian closely to examine the degree of Machiavellianism ascribed to processes that likely have emerged out of a far more tangled and less linear web of motivations, enmities, rivalries and other unknowable factors. The motivations of the protagonists must not be seriously in doubt, but the possibility, and indeed the likelihood, that the actions that led to the promotion of the cult by a faction of the Bury monks came about as much by a fortuitous exploitation of an unexplained death, followed by a shift in popular mood and perhaps a nascent cult on the Norwich model, as by premeditated plans to bring this about, must be considered, and a greater role may therefore be given to popular anti-Jewish sentiments in particular and agency of the populace in general in the creation of this cult. Whatever the exact nature of its genesis, the cult, despite seemingly never achieving great popularity, certainly endured and continued to be promoted by the monastic community. John Lydgate didn't restrict his output to the glorification of Bury's primary saint, but also composed a "Praier to St. Robert".³⁶⁴ The prayer does not add any real detail to the story of Robert, but certainly serves as proof that the cult was either still flourishing at the time of Lydgate's composition of the prayer

³⁶⁴An edited version of the prayer preserved in Bodleian Library MS Laud misc. 683, ff. 22v 23r. is given by Bale. See Bale, 'House Devil', p. 209

or that the Bury monks had decided to attempt to revive it. A visual representation of the cult also survives. A manuscript, known as the 'Bury bible miniatures', comprising a set of twelfth century biblical illustrations together with a set of fifty-eight fifteenth century illustrations and prayers depicts various scenes of the martyrdom of Robert (see figure 34).³⁶⁵ Bale identifies the figure praying in the bottom left as Robert Themelthorpe (d. 1505) of Foulsham in Norfolk, suggesting a late fifteenth century date for the illustration.³⁶⁶



Figure 34: The martyrdom of Robert of Bury³⁶⁷

The illustrations themselves raise as many questions as they answer. Depicted in the top right of the illustration is a woman holding Robert's body above a well; next to it his body is lying in a ditch beside a tree, with an archer shooting heavenwards (Lydgate wrote that

³⁶⁵ The manuscript is now housed at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (MS 101)

³⁶⁶ Bale, *Jew in the Medieval Book*, pp. 118-9

³⁶⁷ Detail of photograph of MS 101, fol. 44, collections of J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

Robert was “naylled to a tre”³⁶⁸ and it must be considered that the hagiography and subsequent iconography of Robert borrowed rather heavily from that of St. Edmund. The bottom left is a donor portrait, linked to the ascending soul of Robert by the prayer “*Meritis sancti Roberti hic et in eum misereatur mei*” and the bottom right depicts a robin on a charter with a seal (the robin was in medieval iconography of course linked to the blood of Christ and here clearly is linked to the blood of Robert, who, like Christ, gave his blood in martyrdom at the hands of the Jews. Additionally, the similarity between robin and Robert would certainly have appealed to the late medieval mind, making the adoption of this bird as the icon of Robert even more apposite). Once again this manuscript can be taken as ‘proof of life’ for the cult of Robert in the late fifteenth century. The high status nature of the manuscript and its ownership by a prominent Norfolk family, while of course not presenting conclusive proof, certainly hints at the cult’s appeal beyond Bury St. Edmunds’ extending into the upper ranks of the regional gentry. The last mention of the cult comes some decades after the creation of this manuscript and once again offers proof of the abbey’s continued promotion. A chapel dedicated to Robert was still in existence in the sixteenth century within the abbey church and the feretrarian account for the years 1520/1 lists 2s. 9d. “for expenses about the singers in the chapel of St. Robert, in the time of divine service on his feast”.³⁶⁹ As with the cult of St. William at Norwich, there remain a number of questions regarding Robert’s popularity and geographical reach, but despite the seemingly limited enthusiasm displayed for both, they clung to life more tenaciously than other more widespread cults and do not seem to become defunct until the eve of the Reformation.

³⁶⁸ Bale, *House Devil*, p. 209

³⁶⁹ Dunn Macray, W., ed., Historical Manuscripts Commission of Great Britain, *The Manuscripts of Lincoln, Bury St. Edmunds, and Great Grimsby Corporations: and the Deans and Chapters of Worcester and Lichfield*, Fourteenth Report, Part VIII, (London, 1895), p. 158

Ely

The Isle of Ely, although strictly speaking lying just outside of the bounds of this discussion, is nevertheless worthy of closer inspection, since it is culturally, as well as geographically closely connected to this region. Its early history and later development as a focus for pilgrimage and veneration of a number of Anglo-Saxon saints, some of whom had other focal points for their veneration within East Anglia makes it an ideal case study. Furthermore, a large number of obedientiary rolls from the later Middle Ages have survived, enabling the closer evaluation of the progress of the cult of St. Etheldreda throughout this period.

5.1. The evidence for the early cult

The most important and well known of the saints of Ely, St. Aetheltryth, also known as Aetheldreda or later Audrey was also the community's founder. Her fame and importance even within or shortly after her own lifetime is made plain in the fact that Bede in his *Ecclesiastical History*, despite his general paucity of information for the religious affairs of East Anglia in the seventh century, devotes an entire chapter to her. And it is this chapter which provides us with the nearest approximation to a contemporary account of her life. Bede's account was written some fifty years after Aetheldreda's death and while it is primarily a work of hagiography, rather than history its relative accuracy in terms of dates and basic narrative need not be seriously doubted. According to Bede, Aetheldreda was one of the daughters of King Anna of East Anglia and was given in marriage first to Tondberht, an ealdorman of the South Gyrwe, and after his death to Ecgfrith, king of Northumbria.³⁷⁰ Whether she did indeed, as Bede most strenuously asserts, preserve her virginity throughout her years of marriage is of no great concern, since it is plain that her marriages were part of a political strategy intended to further the interests of the Kings of East Anglia. Aetheldreda herself had possibly little choice and seemingly even less appetite to participate. Whatever the case may be, with the assistance of Wilfrid, the

³⁷⁰ Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, (Oxford, 2008), p. 202

bishop of York, and Aebbe, the abbess of Coldingham, Aetheldreda managed to absent herself from Ecgfrith's court, "receiv[e] the veil and habit of a nun"³⁷¹ and at length return to East Anglia. If one is to trust the dates given by Bede and the compiler of the late twelfth-century *Liber Eliensis* Aetheldreda was born in the mid-630s, married to Tondberht in the late 650s and to Ecgfrith in around 661.³⁷² According to Bede she remained in Northumbria for twelve years before returning south, and beginning, "in the 673rd year from the incarnation of our lord",³⁷³ her foundation work at Ely. Later sources for her life also preserve a number of narratives concerning her journey and sites particularly associated with her, which may have developed into secondary focal points for her cult. The monastery was originally conceived as a double house for religious of both sexes. Aetheldreda died, most likely in 679, and later conjecture³⁷⁴ has attributed her death to an outbreak of bubonic plague. She was succeeded in the office of abbess by her sister Seaxburh. As mentioned above Bede's inclusion of Aetheldreda in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* points to the quite extraordinary fame she seems to have achieved within half a century of her death. Narratives of female religious are by no means common in this work. The only other such stories concern the abbess Hild, and Aetheldreda's sister, Aethelburh, and her niece, Eorcengota (in itself rather telling of the disproportionate impact Anna's supposed offspring had on shaping the early monastic life in this region). Despite attestations in the *Liber Eliensis* that miracles had in fact been occurring at Ely even within Aetheldreda's lifetime, her funeral within the nun's cemetery in a plain wooden coffin initially seems to have confined Aetheldreda to obscurity and ended this chapter in the early history of Ely. It was not until sixteen years later, when Aetheldreda's sister Seaxburh conceived of the idea that "her bones should be raised and placed in the church in a new coffin",³⁷⁵ and the almost inevitable discovery that Aetheldreda's body was "as incorrupt as if she had died and been buried that very day",³⁷⁶ that interest in her embryonic cult was rekindled and miracles began to increase in frequency. Bede adds that

³⁷¹ Ibid, p. 203

³⁷² Ibid, p. 202, Fairweather, J. trans., *Liber Eliensis*, (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 14-44

³⁷³ Fairweather, *Liber Eliensis*, p. 44

³⁷⁴ Salzman, L. F. ed., *A History of the County of Cambridge and the Isle of Ely*, 10 vols, Volume 2, (London, 1948), p. 199

³⁷⁵ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 203

³⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 204

this shrine was henceforth held in great veneration up to his own day, i.e. the year of the completion of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* in 731.

5.2. Collecting the set: The female saints of Ely

Although a reasonably clear picture can be drawn of the genesis and early history of the cult of St. Aetheldreda, it is at this point that contemporary and near contemporary sources fail and much later chroniclers have to be relied upon to fill in the gaps. Goscelin of Saint Bertin, the foremost of the eleventh century hagiographers writing in England, whose peregrinations brought him to Ely during the abbacy of Symeon (1082-93)³⁷⁷ certainly wrote accounts of the lives of SS Seaxburh, Wearburh and Withburh, and it seems likely that he also wrote a Life of St. Aetheldreda. This *urtext* is now lost, but material from it is incorporated into later hagiographies as well as the *Liber Eliensis*.³⁷⁸ An interesting feature concerning the later accounts of the early years of the cult following her *translatio* is the creation of secondary sites and secondary relics of St. Aetheldreda. The *Liber* echoes the assertions of Bede, that contact with her shroud-cloths could drive away demons and could cure illnesses of various kinds³⁷⁹ and the wooden coffin in which she was originally buried could cure blindness and other eye related maladies. The site of her first burial became a secondary devotional site, since a curative spring of water had arisen there following her translation.³⁸⁰ The sources have almost nothing to add concerning the subsequent history of the monastic house there, save to assert that it was flourishing until the incursion of the *micel here*, the 'large heathen army',³⁸¹ into East Anglia during the winter of 866-867. The story of the devastation wreaked is a familiar one: "The band of nuns was slaughtered...and...the monastery...was set on fire, along with its virgins and its ornaments and relics of saints, male and female".³⁸² Monastic bias and

³⁷⁷ www.oxforddnb.com/article/11105, accessed on 15.03.13

³⁷⁸ Love, R. C. ed., trans., *Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, The Hagiography of the Female Saints of Ely*, (Oxford, 2004), pp. lix-lxxi

³⁷⁹ Fairweather, *Liber Eliensis*, p. 63

³⁸⁰ The exact location of this well is now lost, but curiously a likely medieval well bearing her name was located in Grantchester (where, as Bede records, the white marble sarcophagus used in her translation was found). The well is mentioned in a document of 1659 as 'Tardeys Well' and is marked on OS maps as 'Tarter's Well' (TL 43102 54870). Rattue, J., *The Living Stream, Holy Wells in historical context*, (Woodbridge, 1995), p. 76, <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/roam/historic>, accessed on 16.05.15

³⁸¹ www.omacl.org/Anglo/part2.html, accessed on 21.02.2013

³⁸² Fairweather, *Liber Eliensis*, p. 74

hyperbole must of course be assumed in such accounts of total destruction. But it is nevertheless more than likely that significant damage was done to the fabric of the monastery and life there was severely disrupted or even brought to a complete standstill. Some hagiographical capital was later extracted from this episode in the monastery's history in the form of the tale of the "pitiable pirate"³⁸³ who attempted to hack open the sarcophagus containing St. Aetheldreda and was immediately dispatched by having "his eyes torn from his head by divine agency".³⁸⁴ If the *Liber* is to be believed, the monastic foundation continued in a desultory fashion throughout the latter decades of the ninth and the better part of the tenth century, until the arrival of the Benedictines in 970.³⁸⁵ In the context of this research the interesting thing to note is the obvious survival of the cults of St. Aetheldreda and the other early abbesses of Ely, and the transmission across this one hundred year gulf of traditions concerning their lives and miracles. If one accepts the tenth century date for the source material used by the author of the *Liber*, which contains accounts of five miracles which occurred at the tomb of St. Aetheldreda, then it must follow that during this period, however irregular the monastic disciplines and observances had become, the shrine remained a focus for pilgrimage and veneration in the locality. The re-foundation of Ely was part of the monastic reforms that led to the adoption of the *Regularis Concordia* as the customary rule for English monastic communities. Its author Aethelwold, bishop of Winchester and intimate of King Edgar, was himself responsible for the adoption of this rule at Ely and put the monastic community there on a sound economic footing with extensive land grants.³⁸⁶ Local tradition gives 970 as the year of dedication³⁸⁷ and the author of the *Liber* reports that Archbishop Dunstan decreed the day after Candlemas, i.e. the 3rd of February as its dedication-date. The church was consecrated to St. Peter and at the same time a memorial chapel to St. Mary was also dedicated. St. Aetheldreda, somewhat curiously, did not undergo a translation during this period. St. Aetheldreda was in this period not the

³⁸³ Ibid

³⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 75

³⁸⁵ Ibid, pp. 75-96, The translator of the LE, Janet Fairweather, argues that the section concerning occurrences at Ely in the mid-tenth century (*Liber Eliensis* Book I Chapter 43-Book II Chapter 9) was copied from a contemporary and possibly even pre-Benedictine source.

³⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 98

³⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 143

only saint buried and commemorated there. Besides her there was her sister St. Seaxburh, who had succeeded her as abbess, and Seaxburh's daughter, St. Eormenild, the third abbess of Ely (on the supposed familial relations of the early abbesses and other saints related to them see appendix 1). Abbot Byrhtnoth (the first abbot following Aethelwold's re-dedication) was keen to add to this collection of royal saints and "set about planning how, without a tumult"³⁸⁸ he could acquire yet another of St. Aetheldreda's supposed sisters, St. Withburh. The narrative preserved in the *Vita S. Withburge* relates how Byrhtnoth, together with a band of soldiers went to Dereham in Norfolk (i.e. East Dereham) and after entertaining the "townsfolk [with] generous convivial festivities"³⁸⁹ removed her body from its sarcophagus and carried it off towards Ely. There follows a hair-raising tale of pursuit and a narrow escape and a triumphal entry into Ely. This narrative reveals the enormous importance of relics to such institutions not only in the tenth century, when the theft took place, but equally in the eleventh (when Goscelin penned Withburh's *Vita*), and the twelfth, when the author of the *Liber* once again chose to give it prominence in his account. Of equal interest is the justification given for these actions. Despite the fact that, according to tradition, Withburh is Dereham's founder saint, the theft is described as an entirely legitimate action on Byrhtnoth's part. The glorification of Ely is the sole object and although the actions of Byrhtnoth are acknowledged as being full of "cunning and trickery"³⁹⁰ he himself is described as a "fidelis predo", a 'faithful pirate'³⁹¹ and his deed is a "sacrum facinus".³⁹² Further justification is sought from Withburh's kinswomen already housed at Ely and Goscelin asserts that Aetheltryth, Seaxburh and Eormenild "came out to meet her and gathered her up...and settled her into her everlasting bridal-chamber"³⁹³ along with the monks and clerics. This is by no means an uncommon *topos* in hagiographical works of the central Middle Ages whose protagonists are often either monks or other clergy from a house wishing to acquire relics through theft or quasi-professional relic mongers, akin perhaps

³⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 145

³⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 146

³⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 147

³⁹¹ Ibid, p. 146

³⁹² Love, *Goscelin*, p. 70

³⁹³ Ibid, pp. 73-75

to a modern day antique dealer with a flexible attitude to provenance.³⁹⁴

The Norman Conquest may be supposed to have caused Ely, with its reliance on Anglo-Saxon, and apart from St. Aetheldreda fairly obscure, saints, significant trouble. But it seems that the economic standing of the community, as well as the deference in which these native saints were held, was sufficient for the incomers to preserve native traditions and even begin actively to promote them.³⁹⁵ Abbot Symeon laid the foundations of a new church, as well as associated monastic buildings, in the mid 1080s, but the work remained unfinished at his death in 1093. There followed an interregnum during which the rapacious Ranulf Flambard had charge of the abbey and building works appear to have stopped. But the appointment of a new abbot in 1100 once again saw the renewal of effort and in 1106 St. Aetheldreda's and St. Withburh's remains were translated to their new positions in the new church. At the same time the tombs of SS Seaxburh and Eormenild were also opened and inspected.³⁹⁶ This kin group of Anglo-Saxon religious was thereby given new prominence and reverence by the Norman masters of the abbey and the extraordinary account of the physical appearance of St. Aetheldreda's new shrine given in the *Liber* is worth quoting in some detail to gain an impression of the astonishing amount of labour and money that must have been given to its construction:

“In that place there is a shrine in which is enclosed a marble receptacle containing the virginal corpse of St. Aetheltryth...The side of this shrine which faces the altar is...of silver with images in high relief, well plated with gold. Around the ‘Christ in Majesty’ are seven stones between beryls and crystals and two onyx stones and two almandine stones and twenty-six pearls, and in the crown of this ‘Christ in Majesty’ is one amethyst and two cornelians and six pearls and eight glassy stones. And in the four corners there are four large crystals. And in the surround: nine crystals. And on the southern horn of this side there is a golden necklace studded with one topaz and three emeralds and three sardian stones. In the diadem of the upper image there are seven precious stones and eleven pearls. There is a boss bearing a cross made of copper, well-gilded, with twelve crystals.

³⁹⁴ See Geary, P. J., *Furta Sacra, Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages*, (Princeton, 1978)

³⁹⁵ Keynes, S., ‘Ely Abbey 672 – 1109’ in Meadows, P. & Ramsay, N. eds., *A History of Ely Cathedral*, (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 3-58, p.: 52

³⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 54

On the left-hand side of this shrine the whole wall is of silver, well gilded, with sixteen images in high relief, with ninety-four large crystals and a hundred and forty-nine tiny, crystalline and glassy stones. The eastern side of the shrine is of silver with gilding all over, with images in high relief. There are two crystalline lions with thirty-two crystals and three glassy stones and eight pieces of enamel-work and seven smallish jewelled ornaments. There is a 'Christ in Majesty' which belongs to the frontal of the altar. On the southern side there are sixteen images of silver without gilding and the lower border is of silver-gilt. On this side there are twenty-six crystals. There is another boss made of copper bearing a copper cross, well gilded, with twelve crystals."³⁹⁷

The shrine seems to have appeared thus until the middle of the thirteenth century when Bishop Northwold (1229-54) undertook extensive work on the Cathedral fabric and built the Presbytery into which he translated the bodies of SS Aetheldreda, Withburh, Seaxburh and Eormenhilda.³⁹⁸ Parallel to this great architectural exaltation of the Ely Saints was the development of two fairs held at Ely and centered around the feast days of St. Aetheldreda. Bentham gives a transcript of a charter of Henry I granting a fair to be held *ad Festum Sanctae Etheldredae*.³⁹⁹ This fair was held from 20th to 26th of June and centered around the anniversary of her death on the 23rd. The other fair, which was first mentioned by Matthew Paris⁴⁰⁰ and must therefore at the least have had its *terminus a*

³⁹⁷ Fairweather, *Liber Eliensis*, pp. 352-353, The description in full in Blake's edition of the *Liber Eliensis* reads: *Ibi est unum feretrum sub quo clauditur vas marmoreum continens sancte Aetheldrethe corpus virgineum, versus altare proprium, sicut precellens domina, tota integra, tota incorrupta quiescit in tumulo, quod Dei iussione angelicis ei, ut credimus, parabatur manibus, sicut doctissimus Anglorum Beda in sue [sic] gentis narrat historia. Pars vero huius feretri que versa est ad altare est de argento cum imaginibus elevatis bene paratis auro. Circa maiestatem sunt septem inter birillos et cristallos et duo onichini et duo alemandini lapides et xxvi perli, et in diademate huius maiestatis i ametistus et due corneline et vi perli et viii vitrini lapides. Et in iiii angulis iiii cristalli magni. Et in circuitu ix cristalli. Et in australi cornu huius partis i monile aureum affixum cum i topazio et iii smaragdis et iii sardinis. In diademate superioris ymaginis sunt lapides vii pretiosi et xi perli. Ibi unus pomellus sustinens i crucem de cupro bene deauratam cum xii cristallis. In sinistra parte huius feretri est totus paries de argento bene deauratus cum xvi ymaginibus elevatis cum quater xx et xiiii cristallis magnis et cum c et xl ix minutis lapidibus cristallinis et vitrinis. Orientalis pars huius feretri est de argento cum deauratura per loca cum imaginibus elevatis. Ibi duo leones cristallini cum xxxii cristallis et iii vitrinis lapidibus et viii esmaltis et vii modicis nuscis. Ibi i maiestas que pertinet ad frontalem altaris. In australi parte sunt xvi ymagines de argento sine deauratura et lista subterior de argento deaurata. In hac parte xxvi cristalli. Ibi quidam alias pomellus de cupro, sustinens quondam crucem de cupro bene deauratum cum xii cristallis.* Blake, E. O., ed., *Liber Eliensis*, (London, 1962), p. 289-90

³⁹⁸ Bentham, J., *The History and Antiquities of the Conventual & Cathedral Church of Ely: From the Foundation of the Monastery, A. D. 673, to the Year 1771*, (Norwich, 1812), p. 148

³⁹⁹ Ibid, Appendix XIII, p. 18

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 131

quo in the reign of Henry III, begun on the 17 October (the date of her first translation) and lasted for nine days. Much of the pilgrimage to, and veneration of, the shrines of St. Aetheldreda and her female relations must surely have occurred during those fairs and their establishment during the twelfth and possibly early thirteenth century contributed a great deal to the subsequent popularity of Ely as a centre for pilgrimage. In addition to the fairs and sumptuously displayed relics, Pope Innocent IV (1243-1254) granted a forty day indulgence to pilgrims visiting at the Feast of the Dedication.⁴⁰¹ By the middle of the thirteenth century Ely was therefore in a perfect position to become one of the region's most popular pilgrimage sites.

5.3. The ely sacrist's rolls: plague and endurance

The first obedientiary rolls to survive date from the late thirteenth century and the first record of St. Aetheldreda's shrine comes from the roll for the year 1302.⁴⁰² The rolls are silent in regard to St. Aetheldreda's supposed saintly kin and it must be assumed that devotion to SS Seaxburh, Eormenhilda and Withburh had either never reached sufficient levels or had largely fallen into abeyance. St. Withburh of course was in her cult not confined to Ely (see East Dereham and Holkham). Income to the shrine of St. Aetheldreda in the year 1302 was £11, a figure that was to rise nearly tenfold over the coming century. Figure 35 below shows income to the shrine as listed in the surviving sacrists' rolls stretching from the beginning of the fourteenth century to the eve of the Reformation.

A number of peculiarities regarding the annual income from offerings are immediately apparent. The decline in income during the period 1315-22, when East Anglia was hit by successive waves of climate related crop failures and livestock disease, which can be found at other pilgrimage sites in East Anglia is reversed in St. Aetheldreda's case. Far from a drop in offerings the income almost doubles between 1302 and 1322. Unfortunately, the sequence of rolls is not complete and it is possible and even likely that offerings may briefly have dipped during the worst years. It is nevertheless remarkable that by 1322 income had risen to such a comparatively high level. The next rather curious

⁴⁰¹ Evans, S. J. A. ed., *Ely Chapter Ordinances and Visitation Records: 1241-1515*, Camden Miscellany, Volume XVII, (1940), p. 39

⁴⁰² Chapman, F. R. ed., *Sacrist Rolls of Ely*, 2 vols, Volume II Transcripts, (Cambridge, 1907), p. 20

feature is the income to the shrine between the years 1345 and 1354. In this decade income to the shrine rose by over £5. This may not seem a significant increase given the shrine's average income in this period, but of course the years 1348/49 saw England's population decline by 30-45 per cent⁴⁰³ following the ravages of the Black Death. This nationwide average may have to be adjusted upwards for the regions around Ely, surely the area where most of the pilgrims to St. Aetheldreda's shrine originated. Three manors, all within a ten mile radius of Ely may here be cited to give an idea of the effects of this initial outbreak: at Oakington thirty-five out of fifty tenants died, twenty out of forty-two at Dry Drayton and thirty-three out of fifty-eight at Cottenham manor.⁴⁰⁴ The average mortality in these manors is significantly above the figure suggested above, but it must be remembered that not all areas were affected uniformly and indeed the neighbouring manors of Great Shelford and Elsworth seem to have experienced comparatively few plague deaths.⁴⁰⁵ The Cathedral priory itself suffered an estimated mortality rate of 48.1 per cent, with twenty-six out of fifty-four monks dying. Using the method of measuring mortality amongst the beneficed clergy and extrapolating the figures gives a rate of between 46.7-48.5 per cent for the diocese of Ely⁴⁰⁶ as a whole. And even if one allows that these figures are at the higher end of the spectrum, a death rate for the diocese in excess of 40 per cent seems almost certain. Notwithstanding certain caveats, it may be possible to estimate pilgrim numbers, and therefore the flow of pilgrims to the shrine of St. Etheldreda both before and after the initial outbreak of the plague. Nilson has argued that the most common and indeed standard offering at medieval English shrines was one penny. If this was the case then the income figures can be used to calculate numbers of pilgrims.⁴⁰⁷ Using this admittedly very crude tool this would mean that in 1345 around 8500 pilgrims visited the shrine and nine and around 9500 came to it in 1352; an increase of around 1000.

⁴⁰³ Hatcher, J., *Plague, population and the English economy*, (London, 1977), p. 25

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 147

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 147

⁴⁰⁶ Aberth, J., 'The Black Death in the diocese of Ely: The evidence of the bishop's register', *Journal of Medieval History* 21 (1995), p. 279

⁴⁰⁷ It must of course be noted that such a calculation can at best deliver an extremely rough estimate, since votive offerings and pilgrims offering jewellery or other items, as well as those offering significantly more (or indeed less) cannot be taken into account Nilson, *Cathedral Shrines*, p. 114

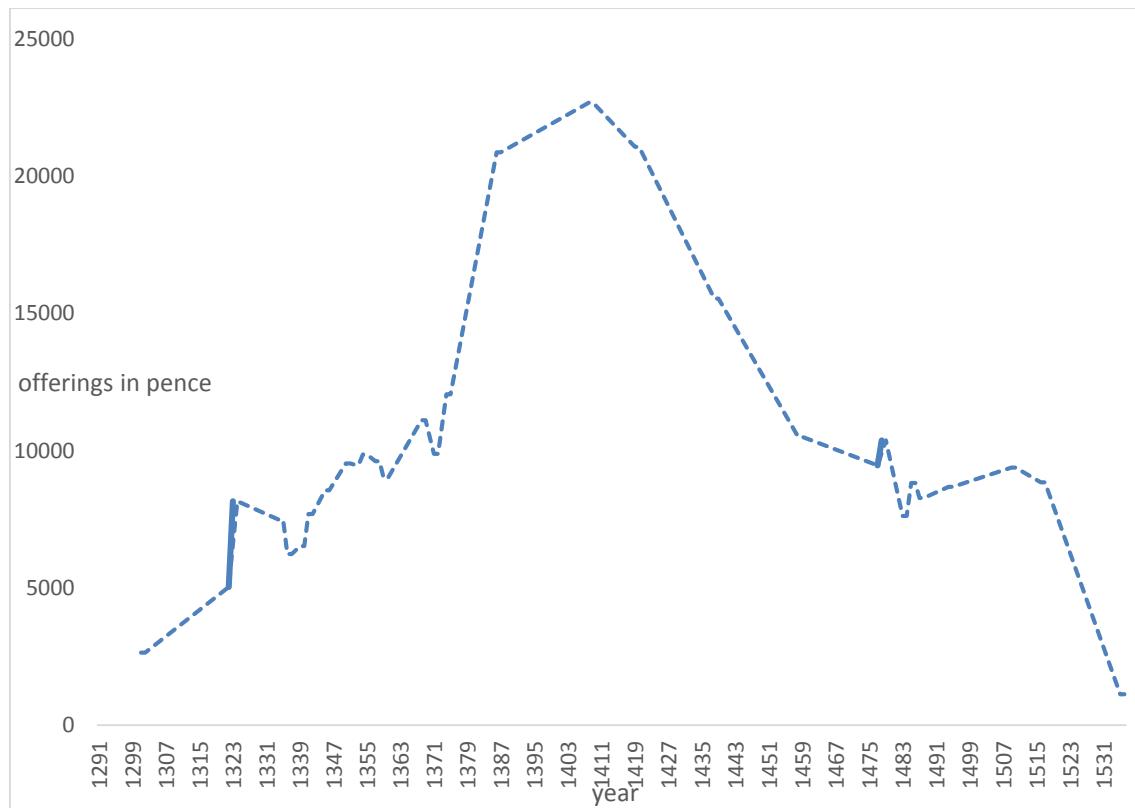


Figure 35: Income in offerings received at the shrine of St. Etheldreda in Ely⁴⁰⁸

Furthermore, supposing that most of the shrine visitors attended the shrine annually as part of one of the fairs or major festivals and did indeed originate from the region around Ely we must also assume that of those 8500 visiting in 1345 around 3500 had by 1352 fallen victim to the plague. So to reach the figure of 9500 for the year 1352 we would, according to these calculations, have to reach the conclusion that the real increase in visitor numbers was closer to 4500, drawn from a population which had decreased by over 40 per cent over the previous three years. The above exercise is of course far too reliant on approximations, estimates and disregarding of many variables to supply accurate figures, but it nevertheless suffices, supposing that one is broadly trusting of the sacrist's accounting during this period, to show broad trends and percentile rates of increase and decrease during these turbulent times.

⁴⁰⁸ Graph by author, compiled from data in Nilson, *Cathedral Shrines*, pp. 216

Interpretations of these figures can be undertaken in several ways. The, in many ways, 'traditional' argument, that in times of disaster the populace turned to God and his saints to allay his wrath and beg for intercession, would simply allow for such an astonishing increase and even expect to find it. After all no greater terror could be struck into the hearts of men than this unprecedented plague. A conclusion regarding this increase St. Aetheldreda's shrine can however not be reached in isolation, since the cathedral offered pilgrims a number of other focal points for veneration and the giving of offerings. The sacrist's accounts also list entries for offerings derived '*de altari ad crucem*', '*de cruce ad fontem*' and '*de Bogis*'.⁴⁰⁹ The charts given below detail income to those shrines as far as account evidence survives. Turning first to the Altar Cross one is immediately struck by the fact that the trends displayed in the income to St. Aetheldreda's shrine are here reversed. Income in offerings to the Altar Cross rose to over 21 pounds in 1302, but had plummeted to just £6 in 1322. The income gradually recovered over the next two decades and was again at around £21 in 1345, but is listed in the next surviving roll (1352) as below £8. Trends shown in the income here seem to conform far closer to what extrapolation of external environmental and social factors might indicate. Income to the Font Cross follows a similar pattern of decline between 1302 and 1322. By the middle of the fourteenth century income there has fallen to such low levels as to make it impossible to pick up any particular trends. Offerings given to the Fetters are recorded too sporadically and general income levels are generally too low to make a convincing case for marked increase or decline, but it does seem to echo the developments seen in the case of St. Aetheldreda's shrine, with offerings rising fairly markedly between the accounts for 1345 and 1352. Adding together all figures, income derived from offerings falls by just over 12 per cent between 1345 and 1352. Bearing in mind the drastic fall in population as a whole during this period this of course still represents a significant increase in offerings in real terms. The questions therefore arising are whether this increase is to be seen as the result of individuals previously not attending the shrine of St. Aetheldreda suddenly undertaking pilgrimages to it or whether an explanation for the rise

⁴⁰⁹ From *boia* (a length of chain or fetters to secure criminals). A length of such chain was displayed at Ely to commemorate a miracle of intercession worked through the merits of St. Etheldreda and St. Benedict. Chapman, *Sacrist Rolls of Ely*, p. 74

in income can be found that does not necessitate the need for thousands of putative new pilgrims. The danger in accepting the explanation that great numbers of new supplicants attended the shrine is to overlook other significant economic factors which might explain these figures in an entirely different way. The exact mortality rate during this initial outbreak of the plague is still subject to debate, but the figures given above are certainly a good and reliable indicator. What these figures cannot show however is the effect this may have had on the monetary economy. The death of large numbers of people does not lead to the disappearance of their assets and wealth (certainly not in the short term), these are largely re-distributed between fewer individuals. It is therefore to be assumed that the regions around Ely, whilst being drastically de-populated also experienced an almost equal and balancing counter effect in the increase of individual wealth. Following this line of thought and applying it to the incomes in offerings detailed above it could therefore be argued that, far from a surge of previously non-participating individuals, the real term increase seen is due to the increased availability of disposable income amongst the survivors.

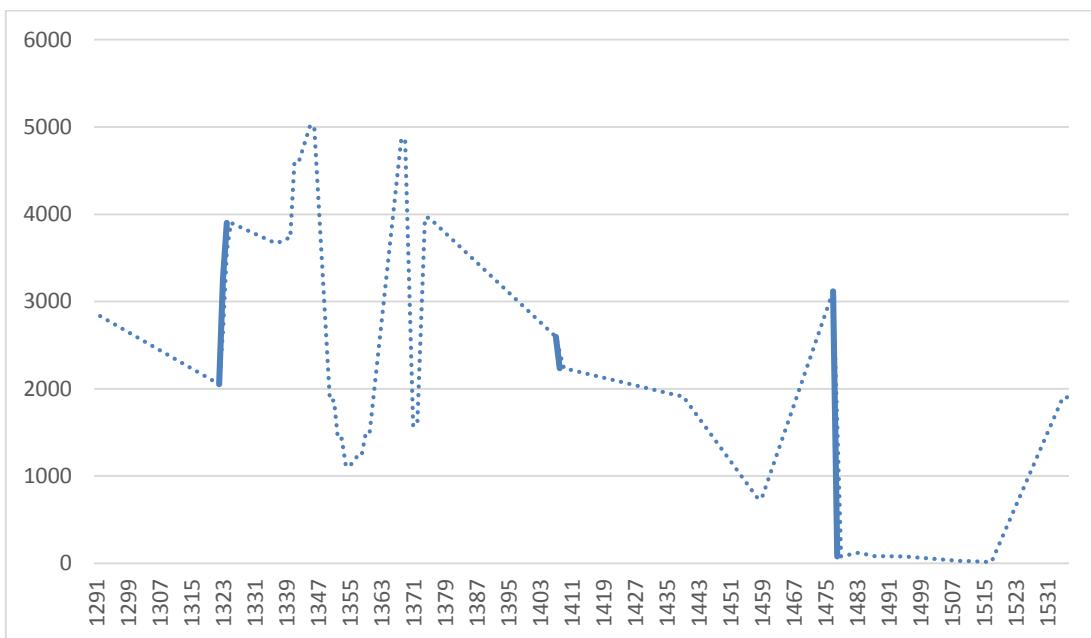


Figure 36: Offerings to the altar cross at Ely⁴¹⁰

⁴¹⁰ Graph by author, compiled from data in Nison, *Cathedral Shrines*, p. 216

In short it is not the number of individuals attending, but the amount each individual gives that may have changed. Of course this argument cannot really be separated from the one outlined above regarding a fundamental psychological urge to either allay heavenly wrath or give thanks for a personal good fortune, but simply as the means to act on such impulses. This would similarly explain the drastic fall in incomes seen at the Altar Cross in the period from 1302 to 1322. Mortality rates during this disastrous time were much lower than in the plague outbreak, but shortages in almost all basic necessities were rife. Individual wealth and disposable income was therefore at a low ebb and shrine offerings were duly curtailed.

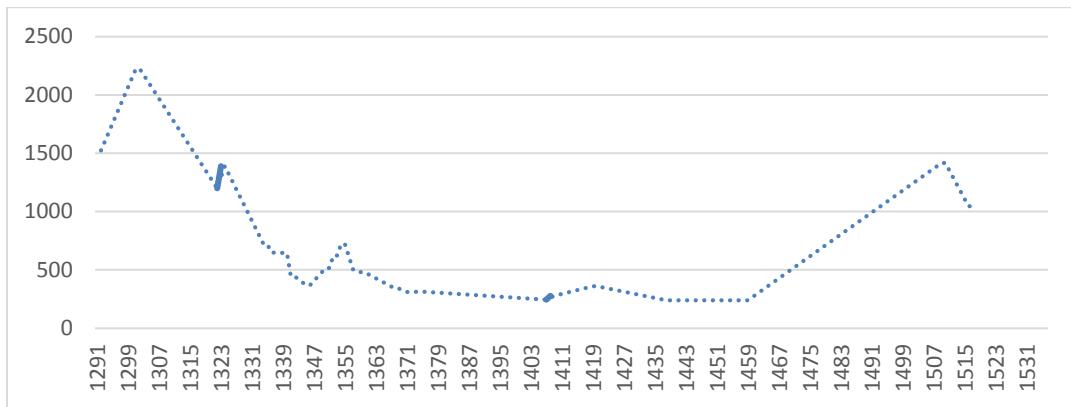


Figure 37: Offerings to the font cross at Ely⁴¹¹

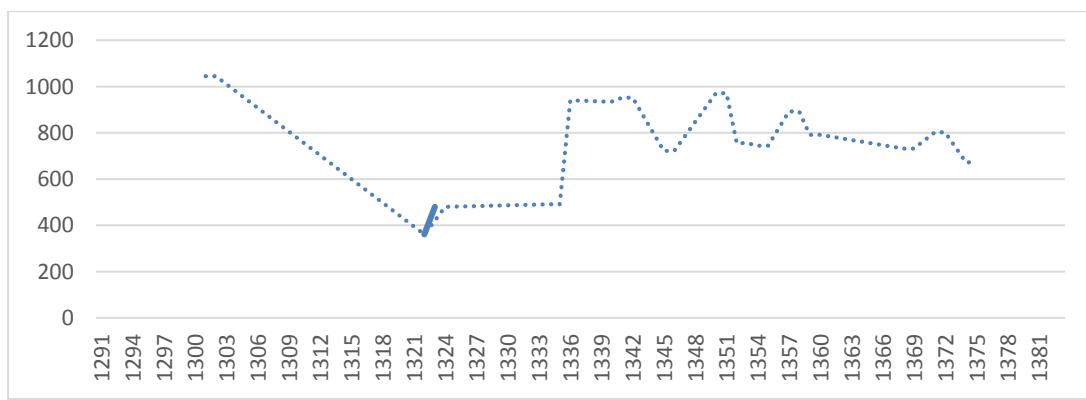


Figure 38: Offerings to the 'Fetters' at Ely⁴¹²

⁴¹¹ Ibid

⁴¹² Ibid

5.4. Conclusions

This model then can certainly be used to explain the overall trends in the offerings income, but it does not account for the striking differences in fortune experienced by the individual shrines. Why does St. Aetheldreda's shrine escape the decline in income when others, such as the shrines, altars and chapels at Norwich cathedral are so significantly affected? The fragmentary nature of the rolls evidence presents us with a significant problem in attempting to answer this question. Put simply it is impossible to ascertain the precise nature of the improvements and works undertaken at individual shrines and what the internal mechanisms for promoting each focal point were and how they may have changed over the period in question. Bentham does however give an account of significant building works in the first half of the fourteenth century. Following the collapse of the cathedral's central tower in 1322 building work on the still extant octagonal dome was begun in the same year. At the same time and to complement the new design "the Bishop generously took upon himself to compleat the Presbytery"⁴¹³ along with significant other works (such as the magnificent Lady chapel) at a cost of over £2034.⁴¹⁴ Significantly this is the part of the cathedral in which the shrine of St. Aetheldreda was housed (the relics were on this occasion not translated, but "further embellished"⁴¹⁵) and the upwards trajectory displayed by offerings to her shrine from 1336 onwards may be due to its increased attractiveness to pilgrims. The figures for the years 1345 and 1352 are therefore quite possibly still influenced by these recent improvements and a shift of popularity away from the Altar Cross and towards St. Aetheldreda's shrine. As always the most sensible approach to issues of such complexity is multi-causal. It is inconceivable that any one factor alone can be responsible and a combination of the arguments laid out above is the most likely explanation.

The most noticeable, and also the feature most difficult to explain, is however the steep increase occurring between 1371 and 1408. Stubbs and Bentham are silent on the matter. There does not seem to have been any renovation or beautification of the shrine to

⁴¹³ Bentham, *History and Antiquities of Ely*, p. 157

⁴¹⁴ Ibid

⁴¹⁵ Stubbs, C. W., *Historical Memorials of Ely Cathedral*, (London, 1897), p. 42

increase visitor numbers, indeed nothing to give any hint as to the nature of this upswing in fortune. A general upswing in economic fortunes and the comparative absence of disastrous environmental factors so prevalent throughout the fourteenth century may perhaps be cited as a contributing factor in the increase, but data across the region for comparative shrines (quite apart from the often unanswerable question of their differing degrees of 'fashionability') is far too fragmented to evidence this. As can be seen wherever evidence of income to a particular shrine survives within the region, relatively rapid increase in offerings followed by an equally rapid decline is not an uncommon feature across East Anglia and seems to be a defining element of later medieval pilgrimage. What marks out St. Aetheldreda's shrine as unique (at least insofar as the evidence from obedientiary rolls is concerned) is the degree to which it retains support throughout the fifteenth and into the sixteenth century. In all other instances (i.e. Norwich Cathedral, Great Yarmouth and St. Leonard's priory) the collapse of the amount collected from offerings occurs earlier and is far more precipitous than in the case of St. Aetheldreda. Indeed, the shrine of St. Aetheldreda is the only example where an increase in the amount of offerings was recorded in the sixteenth century. In the light of this St. Aetheldreda must be seen as a largely 'fashion proof' saint, enduring for nearly a millennium from the last third of the seventh to the first third of the sixteenth century.

Gazetteer

The following, shorter notices of pilgrimage sites are intended to give an overview of the significant number of much smaller, and regionally restricted locations of pilgrimage in medieval East Anglia. These have hitherto been largely overlooked in the historiography of the subject, or have been treated in a generic and often flawed manner. Some are likely to have achieved considerable fame, particularly in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, and are indicative of changing patterns of devotion. As demonstrated above, the evidence overwhelmingly points toward a loss of revenue, and with it a likely loss of popularity, for the majority of the most renowned, monastic centres of pilgrimage during this period. In contrast, a number of parish shrines (such as St. Walstan's shrine at Bawburgh), or locations administered by dependant cells of the large monastic foundations in East Anglia (such as the Red Mount chapel in King's Lynn) were able to retain, and sometimes even increase, popular support and pilgrim traffic. The clear inference to be drawn from this pattern is that the long-established, large monasteries were increasingly diminishing in efficacy in terms of providing pilgrims and supplicants in search of a miracle cure with effective saints. Those saints, by contrast, were more often to be found in otherwise undistinguished parish churches, chapels, or much smaller monastic institutions. It is not always possible to separate the continually present process of change in popularity stemming from nothing more than individual pilgrims' desires to seek new and more effective saints and places from this late medieval trend towards more local, intimate shrines, away from immediate monastic control. The overall pattern is, however, indisputable. Many of these locations have not so far undergone detailed and rigorous study. It is in many cases not possible to do so, since the evidence, in the form of monastic accounts or miracle collections, is not available. What can be achieved is a degree of rectification. The historiographical narratives concerning such shrines come largely in the form of antiquarian writings, which subsequently have informed the public, and to a certain extent academic, imagination concerning these locations. These accounts have in most instances been found to wildly exaggerate the likely renown and popularity of individual locations. Great fame has been ascribed were nothing, save an isolated mention in a medieval will, exists to point toward any pilgrim activity whatsoever. The

following notices will correct those inaccuracies, and give a more nuanced and accurate account of the level of popularity and fame of minor pilgrimage locations within the region. To give both a full, and a corrective overview, the criteria for inclusion are either primary evidence for pilgrimage activity (in most instances late medieval wills specifying proxy pilgrimages), or secondary references ascribing pilgrim activity to a location. The primary evidence from wills was gathered from more than 2000 such documents, and while representing a significant sample size, new evidence will undoubtedly come to light as more texts are subjected to detailed scrutiny.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁶ NRO, Norwich Consistory Court NCC Will Registers, MF 27 & MF 30; Harrod, H. (ed.), 'Extracts of Early Norfolk Wills', *Norfolk Archaeology*, Volumes I, IV, V, (1847, 1855, 1859), Suffolk Record Office, HD 2448/1/1/255/1-3, Northeast, P. (ed.), *Wills from the Archdeaconry of Sudbury 1439-1474: 1*, (Woodbridge, 2001); Northeast, P. & Falvey, H. (eds.), *Wills from the Archdeaconry of Sudbury 1439-1474:2*, (Woodbridge, 2010)

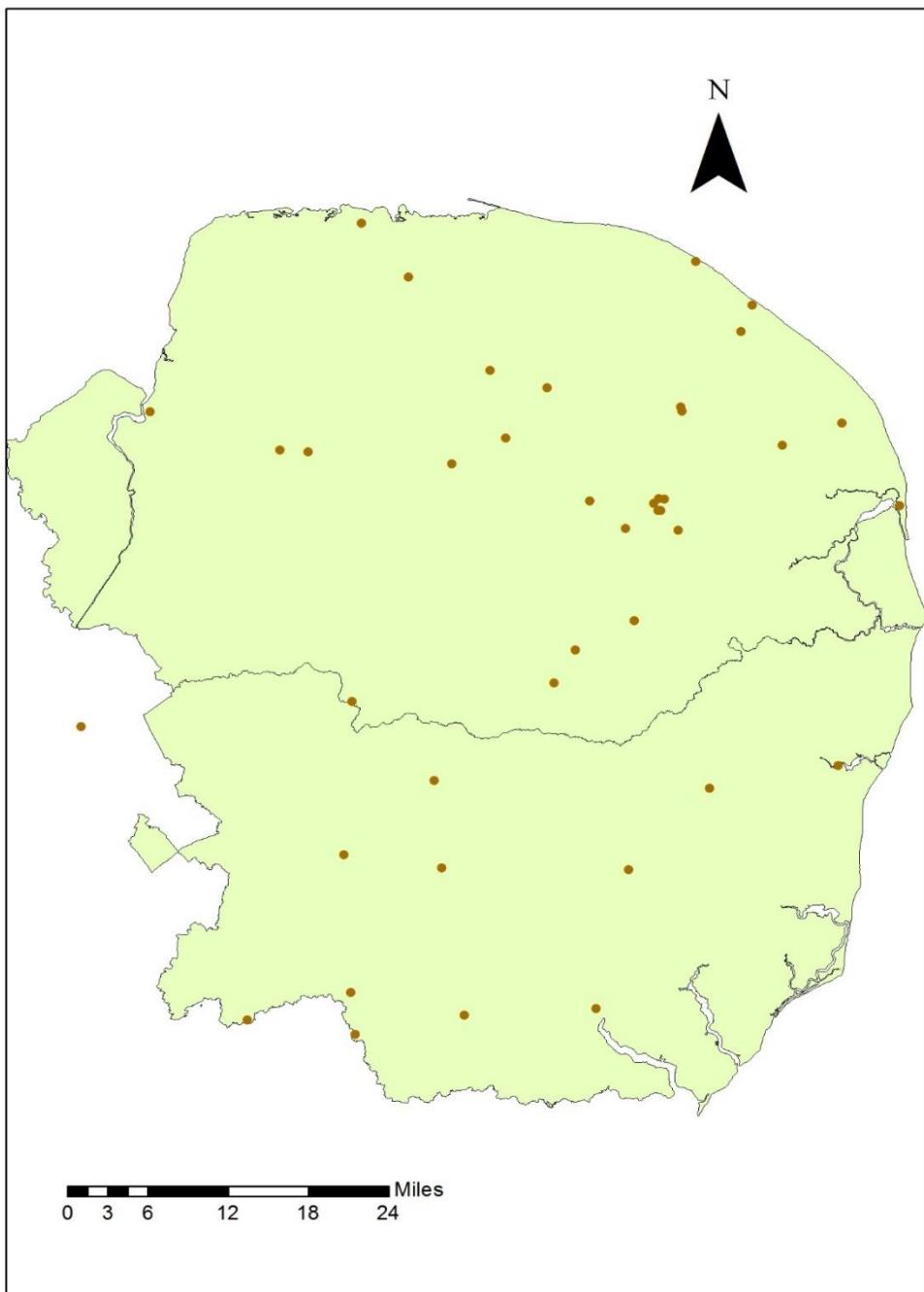


Figure 39: Locations of all shrines discussed in the above case studies and the gazetteers of Suffolk and Norfolk below⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁷ Map by author, data compiled from HER data, OS data and personal GPS data gathering

Gazetteer: Suffolk

1.1. Ashfield cum Thorpe

Nothing is known of a pilgrimage to this chapel save for an isolated mention in a will of Alice Greenehead of Ipswich, dated 1448: “I will my said executor find and ordain a trustworthy man to go on pilgrimage for my mother’s soul from the town of Eye to the chapel of Blessed Mary of Walsingham, out of my own goods, with bare feet, soles and legs, and dressed in woollen clothes only...another time to do another...from Mekylfield [Mickfield] to the church of St. Peter of Thorp by Debenham [Ashfield cum Thorpe]”.⁴¹⁸

The chapel of St. Peter was a round towered church servicing the village of Thorpe until around the turn of the seventeenth century, by which time it had fallen into acute disrepair.⁴¹⁹ The church, retaining its round tower was rebuilt in 1739, but by the middle of the nineteenth century had once again fallen into a ruinous state.⁴²⁰ Today only the ruined round tower survives.

1.2. Blythburgh

The fabric of the present church of the Holy Trinity at Blythburgh dates largely from the fifteenth century, but its history as a focal point for the veneration of indigenous saints has a pedigree stretching back to the middle Anglo-Saxon period. In 653 or 654⁴²¹ King Anna of East Anglia fought the pagan Mercian King Penda⁴²² at a site long identified as lying near the hamlet of Bulcamp, just over a mile outside of Blythburgh. Anna was slain in the battle and his body, alongside that of his fallen son, Jurminus, was, according to the *Liber Eliensis*,⁴²³ brought to Blythburgh church for burial. Anna was still venerated there in

⁴¹⁸ Suffolk Record Office, HD 2448/1/1/255/1

⁴¹⁹ The Suffolk Churches Site, www.suffolkchurches.co.uk/ashfield, accessed on 03.09.15

⁴²⁰ Ibid

⁴²¹ “A.D. 654. This year King Anna was slain, and Botolph began to build that minster at Icanhoe.”, The Online Medieval & Classical Library, <http://omacl.org/Anglo/part1.html>, accessed on 09.01.16

⁴²² Collins, R. & McClure, J., eds., trans., *Bede, The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, (Oxford, 2008), p. 139

⁴²³ Fairweather, J., ed., trans., *Liber Eliensis*, (Woodbridge, 2005), p. 22

the middle of the twelfth century,⁴²⁴ but his son's remains had been removed from Blyburgh to Bury St. Edmunds during the reign of Cnut.⁴²⁵ It seems highly likely that Blyburgh church was a relatively well endowed minster church prior to the Norman Conquest, but whether the location of the minster coincides with that of the present church is more doubtful.⁴²⁶ No concrete evidence can be found for the persistence of the cult of Anna beyond the twelfth century, although a local tradition records that a spring arose on the spot where he had been killed in battle.⁴²⁷ This spring, which is now the site of a rather curious nineteenth century structure believed to have been a travellers' rest, was, and still is, variously known as Lady Well or Queen Anne's Well (almost certainly a corruption of the folkloric tale of King Anna's well). This cannot of course be taken as evidence for a continued flourishing of his cult at Blyburgh, although it is suggestive of the persistence of at least a minimum of local veneration and interest well beyond the twelfth century.

Blyburgh is, albeit tenuously, also connected to another indigenous East Anglian Saint: St. Walstan (see Bawburgh). According to his English verse life St. Walstan "In Blyborow town...borne was; his father Benet, his mother Blythe by name".⁴²⁸ Despite this assertion neither his, nor his mother Blythe's (Blida) cult do seem to have gained any particular traction in Blyburgh and no traces of any veneration of these saints survive there.

1.3. Haughley

The present church in this location dates to the mid-fourteenth century, albeit significantly altered by Victorian restorations in the 1860s and 1870s.⁴²⁹ A church is

⁴²⁴ "There is in the same province a place called Blyburgh in the vernacular, in which the body of the venerable King Anna is buried, and to this day is venerated by the pious devotion of faithful people.", Ibid

⁴²⁵ Arnold, *Memorials, Volume I*, p. 361

⁴²⁶ See Harper-Bill, C., ed., *Blyburgh Priory Cartulary* 2 vols, Volume 1 (Woodbridge, 1980), pp. 1-2 regarding the likelihood that the minster church was sited on the same spot as the later priory and not on the site of the church of the Holy Trinity.

⁴²⁷ Morley, C., *East Anglian Magazine* 7 (1948), pp. 235-6

⁴²⁸ James, M. R., 'Lives of St. Walstan', *Norfolk Archaeology* 19 (1917), pp. 238-267, p. 251

⁴²⁹ MacCulloch, D., Martin, E., Paine, C., Easton, T., Aitkins, P., Price, R., Malster, B., Barnard, M. & Eddershaw, D., 'Excursions 2011', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute for Archaeology & History* XLII, Part 4, pp. 543-60, p. 543

mentioned in Haughley in the Domesday survey, and the fourteenth century structure is doubtlessly the latest in possibly a series of rebuilds since the eleventh century. The church is dedicated to the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, but Haughley's reputation as a pilgrimage destination does not come from this saint so beloved in Suffolk. In 1252 Hailes Abbey in Gloucestershire was given the advowson of Haughley.⁴³⁰ Less than two decades later, in 1270, Hailes was presented with a portion of the Holy Blood of Christ by Edmund, Earl of Cornwall, the son of the founder of Hailes Abbey, who had purchased it in Germany.⁴³¹ Its arrival on the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross established Hailes as one of the major pilgrimage destinations in the west of England.⁴³² One of the chapels at Haughley church, possibly located at the east end of the south aisle,⁴³³ was dedicated to the Holy Cross, no doubt in commemoration of the Hailes relic. In 1393 an indulgence was issued for those who visited and gave alms to the chapel of the Holy Cross at the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross.⁴³⁴ Although direct evidence for pilgrimage to Haughley is lacking, it seems likely that it was a stop on the route from the east of the county to the more established shrines at Woolpit and Bury St. Edmunds, as well as a possible proxy destination for those unable to undertake a pilgrimage to Hailes Abbey.

1.4. Ipswich

The shrine of 'Our Lady of Grace' in Ipswich was, unlike its Walsingham counterpart, not in the care of a monastic institution, but was instead housed in an extra-mural chapel

⁴³⁰ Ibid

⁴³¹ St. Clair Baddeley, W., *A Cotteswold shrine: being a contribution to the history of Hailes, county of Gloucester: manor, parish and abbey*, (London, 1908), p. 56-61

⁴³² Some uncertainty exists as to the precise nature of this relic and its reliquary. A later version of the annals of Hailes claims that a second portion of the Holy Blood, enclosed in a cross-shaped reliquary was given to the abbey in 1295 by Edmund. An earlier version of the Hailes annals claims that the relic enclosed was a part of the True Cross, rather than the Holy Blood. See Vincent, *The Holy Blood*, pp. 137-8. This uncertainty has in its turn seemingly given rise to some confusion in the public discourse regarding the nature of pilgrimage to Haughley, with claims that Haughley church housed a portion of the True Cross. See for example <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haughley>, accessed on 17.01.17, <http://www.britainexpress.com/counties/suffolk/churches/haughley>, accessed on 17.01.17 and

MacCulloch, N. J. H., *Haughley Past and Present*, (Bury St. Edmunds, 1983)

⁴³³ MacCulloch, *Excursions*, p. 543

⁴³⁴ Calendar of Papal Registers, 1391-1393, (London, 1902), p. 456

situated just outside the western walls of the town.⁴³⁵ The original dedication of this chapel was to All Saints, but this appears to have been supplanted after the fame of the miracle working statue of St. Mary became more widespread. This building was originally designated a church and originated in the early Norman period.⁴³⁶ By the year 1219 it had been appended to the parish of St. Matthew. The precise location and early history of the chapel that was later to house this statue are expertly set out in a recent book by Blatchly and MacCulloch and need not detain us here⁴³⁷ except in the matter of its possible size (and the implications thrown up by this regarding the shrine's early history). As is the case with Walsingham, the earliest history and genesis of the shrine is rather problematic. Most publications dealing with this shrine give 1152 as the year of its first mention.⁴³⁸ The present author could not find any primary source evidence to corroborate this assertion. Indeed, where citations do exist they exclusively cite other secondary sources. The date may have at some point become confused with the likely year of the foundation of the priory at Walsingham, but almost certainly does not relate in any way to the Ipswich shrine. More cautious writers cite the year 1297 as the *terminus ad quem* for the establishment of the shrine. This date certainly has some basis in the primary sources. An entry in the Close Rolls reveals that King Edward I was present in Ipswich at the beginning of 1297 to attend the marriage between his daughter Elizabeth and John, Count of Holland.⁴³⁹ The wedding itself did not however take place in what later became known as the chapel of 'Our Lady of Grace', but in a chapel at the priory of St. Peter and St. Paul.⁴⁴⁰

Far more promising evidence for dating the foundation of this shrine can be found in the Papal Registers. A commission and mandate dated March 1327, given at Avignon, orders the bishop of Norwich to "relax sixty days of enjoined penance to penitents who

⁴³⁵ Smith, S., *The Madonna of Ipswich*, (Ipswich, 1980), p. 15

⁴³⁶ Blatchly, B. & MacCulloch, D., *Miracles in Lady Lane, The Ipswich Shrine at the Westgate*, (Dorchester, 2013), p. 4

⁴³⁷ *Ibid*

⁴³⁸ See Waller, G., *Walsingham and the English Imagination*, (Farnham, 2011), p.: 35, Vail, A., *Shrines of Our Lady in England*, (Leominster, 2004), p. 103/4, Weir, A., *Elizabeth of York, The first Tudor Queen*, (London, 2014), p. 310 and Santoro, N.J., *Mary in our Life, Atlas of the Names and Titles of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and their place in Marian Devotion*, (Bloomington, 2011), p. 432

⁴³⁹ PRO, *Calendar of Close Rolls, Edward I, Volume 4*, (London, 1906), p. 75

⁴⁴⁰ Vale, M., *The Princely Court: Medieval Courts and Culture in North-West Europe, 1270-1380*, (Oxford, 2001), p. 143

contribute to the completion of the chapel in the place called 'Ypeccug', in his diocese, where a representation of the Blessed Virgin was found underground, and where divers great miracles have been wrought".⁴⁴¹ The chapel in 1327 then was obviously in need of a great deal of repair work and the finding of the image and the beginning of the cult were clearly relatively recent occurrences⁴⁴². Contrary to much of the historiography of the Ipswich shrine its origins are to be found in the early decades of the fourteenth and not in the middle of the twelfth century.

Sadly, no detailed accounts of the offerings received at the shrine survive and its subsequent history must necessarily be given in a rather piecemeal way, utilizing the fragmentary evidence available. One indicator of its success, namely royal attention, is present over the entirety of the period of the shrine's existence. In 1342, Edward III gave it 'royal approval' by sending money to the shrine.⁴⁴³ In 1402, Henry IV's daughter gave 3s. 4d. (a quarter of a mark) to the "precious image"⁴⁴⁴ of Mary during her stay in the town and in 1502, Elizabeth of York (see page 23) sent her chaplain, William Barton, to again offer 3s. 4d.⁴⁴⁵ at the shrine. Where royalty led the upper echelons of society were sure to follow and in 1481 the household book of John Howard reveals that he gave "to Eppeswich to our Lady of Gras 10s."⁴⁴⁶ The shrine is also mentioned in the Paston Letters, with Margery writing to her husband John Paston in 1482 that "my Lady Caltorp hath ben at Geppeswich on pilgrymache".⁴⁴⁷ From the sparse evidence gathered from medieval wills from Ipswich it appears that the shrine underwent an upswing in support from the local populace. A number of wills from the late fifteenth and the early sixteenth centuries contain bequests to the chapel containing the shrine, such as the will of William Mynot (1498) granting 40s. "to the making of a porch of Our Lady of Grace for poor people to sit

⁴⁴¹ Bliss, W.H., ed., *Calendar of Papal Registers, 1305-1342*, (London, 1895), p. 256

⁴⁴² The issuing of the papal indulgence in 1327 may only partly have been inspired by the recent discovery of the image of St. Mary, and may have had more to do with the landing of Isabella of France and Roger Mortimer at nearby Orford in the previous year, and the desire of John XXII for good relations with the new regime.

⁴⁴³ Ormrod, W.M., 'The personal religion of Edward III', *Speculum* 64 (1989), pp. 849-77, p. 857

⁴⁴⁴ Redstone, L.J., *Ipswich through the ages*, (Ipswich, 1948), p. 111

⁴⁴⁵ Harris Nicholas, *Privy Purse Expenses of Elizabeth of York*, p. 3

⁴⁴⁶ Payne Collier, J., *Household Books of John Duke of Norfolk and Thomas Earl of Surrey*, (London, 1844), p. 44

⁴⁴⁷ Gairdner, *Paston Letters*, Volume 6, p. 57

on”,⁴⁴⁸ and the bequest of John Tymerley (1503) of a dymysent [? damask] girdle, silver and gilt”.⁴⁴⁹ And it is in this period that the shrine suddenly came to prominence thanks to a singular miracle.

1.4.1. A damsel in distress: A sixteenth century miracle at Ipswich

An extraordinary account of a miracle at the shrine of Our Lady of Grace of Ipswich survives from the year 1516.⁴⁵⁰ Penned by Robert Curson it offers a vivid description of the cure of a possessed girl in front of the shrine. Curson was at this time living in Ipswich retired from an astonishingly varied and chequered career as a courtier and soldier. He was one of Henry VII’s tournament champion’s, served as sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk in 1496-7, fought the Turks in the train of the holy Roman Emperor Maximillian I, and was accused of assisting a Yorkist attempt to overthrow the king.⁴⁵¹ Apart from his eye witness testimony of the Ipswich miracle a clue to his own religious allegiances may be garnered from Foxe’s account of the burning of a Lollard at Ipswich in 1515. According to Foxe, a proclamation was made during the burning to the effect that anyone who cast a stick on the fire should be “graunted fortye dayes of pardon by my Lord Byshop of Norwich”.⁴⁵² Accordingly “Barne [Baron] Curson..., with many others of estimation being there present, did rise from their seates, and wyth their swords did cut downe boughes, and throw them into the fire”.⁴⁵³ Foxe’s ‘Acts and Monuments’ is of course a problematic source, but one may infer from this episode that Robert Curson took an active interest in religious matters in the locality and that, as befitting one of the most socially elevated residents of Ipswich, he was keen to uphold the long established observances of the church. His account of the miracle equally sought to promote the shrine at Ipswich and to establish its fame and miracle working powers. The full account can be found rendered into modern English in

⁴⁴⁸ SRO, HD 2448/1/1/255/2

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid, see also the will of John Mapylhed (1502) for a bequest of a taper of wax to be set before Our Lady of Grace and the will of John Briggs (1516) who wished to be buried in the chapel of Our Lady.

⁴⁵⁰ BL MS Harvey 651, ff. 194v -196v. This is a contemporary clerk’s copy of a first person narrative written by Robert Curson. Apart from his eye witness testimony of the Ipswich miracle a clue to his own religious allegiances may be garnered from Foxe’s account of the burning of a Lollard at Ipswich

⁴⁵¹ Oxford Dictionary of national Biography, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/74438>, accessed on 02.03.16

⁴⁵² Foxe, J., *Actes and Monuments of these Latter and Perillous Days, Touching Matters of the Church*, (London, 1583), p. 1132, accessed through www.johnfoxe.org, accessed on 02.03.16

⁴⁵³ Ibid

Blatchly & McCulloch "Miracles in Lady Lane". Curson wrote of the possession by the devil of the "daughter of Roger Wentford [Wentworth] in Essex, a damsel of twelve years of age".⁴⁵⁴ Her possession manifested itself in great rages and violence against others and herself. In between these fits she had visions of St. Mary "in the picture and stature of the image of Our Lady of Grace in Ipswich".⁴⁵⁵ She pleaded to be taken to this shrine and was laid before it in her greatly distressed state. There then followed a series of temporary cures and relapses, and repeat appearances of the girl at the shrine. Curson wrote that on the occasion of her third visit to the shrine "beyond a M [1000] persons ...saw the sight".⁴⁵⁶ On this occasion the Abbot of Bury⁴⁵⁷ attended the shrine and made a promise to return every year on foot should the girl be cured. Following another temporary cure in front of a "great [many] people"⁴⁵⁸ the girl and her family made their way back to Essex. The girl had made a vow to return within eleven days to the shrine, but it appears that her family thwarted her in this. With the breaking of this vow the girl's distress returned and the family once again set out for Ipswich. After her visit to the shrine she "called...the best learned men and the worshipful of the town...to her lodging"⁴⁵⁹ and for two hours "made a great and marvellous argument against the...learned men".⁴⁶⁰ Following an admonition by her mother for such impudence the girl once again fell into a fit. Robert Curson was himself present at this display and thrust a gold crucifix into the girl's hand, effecting her cure. Following this two other female members of this family briefly went mad, before being apparently cured through the girl's intercession on their behalf. Lastly the girl's brother suffered the same fate until he was "the most stark mad man that might be...calling to his father 'Where is that whoreson of my father?'".⁴⁶¹ He too was healed through the girl's new-found intercessory powers; this episode is vividly described in Curson's account and took the form of the girl pouring holy water into the mouth of her raving brother and blowing into his body to drive out the devil. It may

⁴⁵⁴ Blatchly & McCulloch, *Miracles*, p. 69

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid, p.70

⁴⁵⁷ The abbot is not named in this account, but it must have been the last abbot of Bury St. Edmunds John Reeve (1513-39).

⁴⁵⁸ Blatchly & McCulloch, *Miracles*, p. 71

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 72

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid

⁴⁶¹ Ibid, p. 73-4

have been felt that the spectacle and the tumult it was creating had by this time gone on long enough and on the very next day the rector of St. Matthew's, John Bailey, preached a sermon extolling the miracle and brought this period of high drama and excitement to a close. Curson repeatedly quotes the girl's pleas to others to be "steadfast in the faith".⁴⁶² This emphasis on the retention of the faith and observances of the church may of course be simply a matter of Curson's interpolation of these utterances to further his own narrative bias, but they are also reminiscent of other, similar tales. The entire story of the girl's illness, her visions and her subsequent extolling of the virtues of St. Mary are very similar to the experiences of Elizabeth Barton, the holy maid of Kent, ten years later.⁴⁶³ They also appear to echo the way Margery Kempe "went out of her mind and was amazingly disturbed and tormented with spirits",⁴⁶⁴ a century before.

This account seemingly gained popularity and four years later, in 1520, the Oxford bookseller John Dorne was offering a printed pamphlet version of "The miracke of oure Lady ypsiwise"⁴⁶⁵ for two pence. Thomas More utilized the story in his *Dialogue Concerning Heresies* to defend the practice of pilgrimages and to show their undoubted effectiveness in procuring miracles. More seemed especially concerned to repel any suggestion of foul play in this miracle account and assures the reader that "in this matter [there was] no possibility of counterfeiting, no simpleness in the seers...and the fashion itself too strange for any man to feign".⁴⁶⁶ Quite apart from its wider dissemination throughout the 1520s it appears clear from Curson's account that the miracle caused a great stir in Ipswich and that it aroused great and renewed interest in the shrine of Our Lady of Grace. It appears then that the fame of this shrine and its enduring place in public consciousness after the Reformation does not rest on its great antiquity and long history of pilgrimage, but a flowering in the late middle ages, at a time when many older and longer established shrines were finding it difficult to attract pilgrims and retain their

⁴⁶² Ibid, p. 72-3

⁴⁶³ Barton also suffered from an unknown illness that manifested itself in seizures and contortions, much like the girl in Robert Curson's account. She also spoke of the importance of pilgrimage and prayer to St. Mary and the saints. See Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1598>, accessed on 02.03.16

⁴⁶⁴ Windeatt, B. A., trans., *The Book of Margery Kempe*, (London, 1985), p. 33

⁴⁶⁵ Madan, F., 'The daily ledger of John Dorne, 1520' in Fletcher, C. R. L., ed., *Collectanea, First Series*, (Oxford, 1885), p. 86

⁴⁶⁶ Lawler, T. M. C., ed., *Thomas More, A Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, (London, 1981), p. 93-4

popularity. It appears that the assessment of the shrine carried out by Thomas Rush on behalf of Thomas Cromwell which stated that the income from offerings was at an all-time low and that “devotion [at the shrine of Our Lady] is decayed”⁴⁶⁷ was borne more from a desire to please his master than the realities on the ground, although the intervening two decades between the miracle of the maid witnessed by Robert Curson and the visit by Thomas Rush may have seen a decline in interest in line with so many other shrines. Some devotion and attachment remained however and the removal of the statue in 1538 appears to have caused difficulties with the local population.⁴⁶⁸

1.5. Kersey

The church is a pre-conquest foundation mentioned in Domesday Book.⁴⁶⁹ By the early thirteenth century a small priory of Austin Canons had been founded in Kersey. They received the mother church of Kersey with all its appurtenances sometime in the late 1220s through a grant made by the widow of Thomas de Burgh.⁴⁷⁰ The priory seems to have fallen into poverty by the middle of the fourteenth century and was dissolved in 1444 and its endowments given to the college of St. Mary and St. Nicholas (later King’s College, Cambridge).⁴⁷¹ There is no direct evidence for a shrine to St. Mary being the focus for pilgrimage at Kersey church while it was under the administration of the canons. The first reference to pilgrimage to this church comes from a papal bull dated 1464.⁴⁷² Despite

⁴⁶⁷ Smith, *Madonna of Ipswich*, p. 46

⁴⁶⁸ The removal was facilitated by Thomas Wentworth (1500-51), almost certainly a relative of Roger Wentworth whose daughter was the famous ‘damsel’ in Robert Curson’s account. Thomas Wentworth was sixteen at the time of the miracle and undoubtedly knew the story well (and perhaps had some familial insight). See The History of Parliament, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/wentworth-sir-thomas>, accessed on 03.03.16

⁴⁶⁹ www.opendomesday.org/kersey, accessed on 14.09.15

⁴⁷⁰ Page, *History of Suffolk*, p. 107

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid*

⁴⁷² “To all Christ’s faithful, etc. Decree, as below. Pius II, having learned that to the parish church of St. Mary, Kersey, called de Pietat(e), in the diocese of Norwich, there was 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, granted in perpetuity, under date Id. March anno 6 [1464], to all who, being truly penitent and having confessed, visited on the feasts of the Annunciation and Nativity of the said Virgin, from the first to the second vespers, and gave alms for the enlargement and restoration of the said church, an indulgence of three years and three quarantines of enjoined penance, the said grant to be null and void if any similar and unexpired indulgence had been

the mention of 'the great resort of the faithful' who had been and still were drawn to a 'certain image' of St. Mary, this may have been a pilgrimage of fairly recent origin at this time. The bull specifically refers to the 'restoration' of the church, which may indicate that it had fallen into a state of some disrepair during the penurious last century of the existence of the priory and that a pilgrimage was therefore being promoted to facilitate the necessary remedial work. The fact that the bull also mentions the feast of the Nativity in conjunction with the survival at Kersey church of the remnant of an alabaster group depicting St. Anne teaching Mary to read⁴⁷³ may point to a secondary cult of St. Anne.

1.6. Laxfield

The above mentioned will of Alice Grenehead also mentions another pilgrimage to be carried out on her behalf, this time to Laxfield (Laxfield, Suffolk).⁴⁷⁴ As with the Ashfield cum Thorpe bequest, this is the only evidence connecting Laxfield with the business of pilgrimage. The church's dedication is 'All Saints' and no noteworthy images, statues or reliques are known to have been housed there.

1.7. Long Melford

The church of Holy Trinity in Long Melford is a remarkable structure in more ways than one. It is the longest church in Suffolk and although parts of the structure date back to the fourteenth century⁴⁷⁵ the majority of its standing elevation is perpendicular in nature. Its grand rebuilding occurred in the period from 1460 to 1495 and was largely financed by John Clopton.⁴⁷⁶ Clopton also added the adjoining yet separate Lady Chapel. In an

granted by the said pope. Inasmuch as pope Pius died before his letters were drawn up, the pope hereby decrees that the present letters shall suffice as proof of the said indulgence." Twemlow, J. A., *Calendar of Papal Registers, 1458-1471*, (London, 1933), p. 419

⁴⁷³ Marks, R., *Image and Devotion in late medieval England*, (Stroud, 2004), p. 150

⁴⁷⁴ "...and from Mekylfeld to the church of Laxfeld...", SRO, HD 2448/1/1/255/1

⁴⁷⁵ Suffolk Heritage Explorer, www.suffolk.gov.uk/Entry LMD 068, accessed on 19.09.15

⁴⁷⁶ Clopton was a successful clothier who achieved nationwide social and political prominence in the middle of the fifteenth century. He was appointed sheriff for Norfolk and Suffolk in 1452-53 and arrested as a Lancastrian sympathiser in 1461. Unlike most of his co-conspirators he escaped beheading and returned to

addendum to his will “the saide John Clopton will that the saide c. marke be spent on the garnysshing of oure Lady Chapell, and of the cloister ther abowte that the saide John Clopton hathe done new made in Melford churchyard”.⁴⁷⁷ 100 marks was a large sum and one can but wonder at the splendour of the ‘garnysshing’. No detailed account of the chapel as a whole from this time survives, but the appearance of the pre-Reformation church is described in some detail in a transcript of an account by Roger Martyn, a sixteenth century Long Melford recusant⁴⁷⁸ and does indeed hint at very rich and elaborate furnishings. The same Roger Martyn also was in possession of a churchwarden’s inventory from 1529, which equally survives in transcript form and may yield clues as to whether the Lady Chapel at Long Melford was indeed the focus of yet another Marian pilgrimage in Suffolk as has often been supposed.⁴⁷⁹ It is worth quoting the inventory in some detail to capture the richness of the objects and the overall effect they may have achieved on visitors to the Lady Chapel:

“First, a Girdle, the gift of Madam Brooke, of silver, and enamelled with 10 bars...

A Red Girdle, the gift of Madam Tye, weighing, with the Cross, 4 oz....

Ten Langets of silver, the gift of the said Alice Tye, weighing 11/4 oz....

Three Rings upon the Apron of our Lady

Two little Rings, one shelling another.

Four little Rings, shelled together, in silver.

Upon the said Apron a Spon of silver, which Spon was broken, to set in the Stones about our Lady.

An Ouch of gold, and enamelled, with one stone in the midst of it, with 3 pearls about it.

his native Suffolk to seemingly devote his energy into the rebuilding of Long Melford church, see Delany, S., *Impolitic Bodies: Poetry, Saints, and Society in fifteenth century England, The Work of Osbern Bokenham*, (Oxford, 1998), p. 16 & McMurray Gibson, G., *The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the late Middle Ages*, (Chicago, 1989), p. 80/81

⁴⁷⁷ Howard, J.J., ed., *The Visitation of Suffolke, Made by William Hervey, Clarenceux King of Arms, 1561*, (Lowestoft, 1866), p. 38

⁴⁷⁸ For a full transcript of this document see Parker, W., *The History of Long Melford*, (London, 1873), pp. 70-73

⁴⁷⁹ See Roberts, C. & Roberts, P., eds., *Pilgrimage: The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan*, (Cambridge, 2002), p. 125 and Cook, G. H., *The English Mediaeval Parish Church*, (London, 1954), p. 121

A pair of Beads of Coral, with the Pater Noster of silver; and upon the same beads a piece of Coral closed in silver, and one Buckle of silver.

A Pair of Jett Beads, with a button of silver and gilt, for the Crede; and upon the same beads be twenty-three small round beads of silver.

A Stone enclosed with silver and gilt, with the Trinity graven on the back side.

A Lyon or Lebard, parcel gilt, with a chain to the same.

A piece of Carall [coral] closed in silver, the gift of Alice Tye.

A Buckle, with ten stones set in the same.

A Buckle of silver and gilt, with 13 square chequers upon it.

A Buckle with three stones in it...

An Agnus Dei enclosed in silver and gilt.

Two other like Hoops, with either of them 4 branches upon them of silver.

Ten other small Buckles..."⁴⁸⁰

All these appear to be votive items left by the faithful to adorn the statue of Mary in the Lady Chapel. No other evidence for pilgrimage survives connected with the Lady Chapel, but from the lavish *ex voto* objects detailed above it seems reasonable to infer that Long Melford indeed housed a statue of St. Mary of some repute and must during the first third of the sixteenth century be placed alongside the many other Suffolk shrines dedicated to this saint. As at Kersey there is also a suggestion of the veneration of St. Anne in Long Melford. The account of Roger Martyn, as well as describing the church's interior also describes some of the festivals and rituals of the church year and mentions a "perambulacion"⁴⁸¹ to the chapel of St. Anne (this was the private Clopton family chapel) during Rogation Week. The church also possessed another relic of note. The will of John Clopton bequeaths to his son William his "relik of the peler [i.e. the pillar Jesus was bound to] of oure Lorde".⁴⁸² The same relic occurs in the 1529 churchwarden inventory as "[a]

⁴⁸⁰ Parker, *History of Melford*, p. 79

⁴⁸¹ Ibid, p. 73

⁴⁸² This relic may have come to the church at Melford as a souvenir of a journey to the Holy Land. Other instances of such illicit relic pilfering are recorded, such as for example from Eton, Buckinghamshire, where the priest William Wey recorded in 1458 that he had acquired stones from the Holy Sepulchre and a piece of the pillar at which Christ was scourged, Spencer, B., *Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges*, London, 1998), p. 3 & Howard, *Visitation of Suffolke*, p. 38

Relique of the Pillar that our Saviour Christ was bound to, the gift of Sir William Clopton".⁴⁸³ Other unspecified relics mentioned in the will do not make their way into the church's possessions and are unaccounted for.

1.8. Stanton

Stanton, like a good number of medieval East Anglian parishes, had two parish churches, that of St. John and All Saints. A church is recorded in the Domesday survey, but whether this was the predecessor of St. John's or All Saints is not clear.⁴⁸⁴ An isolated mention in a medieval will from Ipswich attests pilgrim activity in Stanton. Alice Greenehead of Ipswich (will dated, 1448) left bequests for various pilgrimages to be carried out on her behalf, among them a pilgrimage from "Mekylfeld [Mickfield] to Stanton"⁴⁸⁵. No specific Saint is mentioned in the will, but Wendy Goult asserts that All Saints church was "said to have held a Saint called St. Parnell [St. Petronilla] which was subject to ...pilgrimage",⁴⁸⁶ although it is unclear where this attribution originates (see Long Stratton, Norfolk for details on St. Petronilla).

1.9. Stoke-by-Clare

The church of St. John the Baptist in Stoke-by-Clare is a pre-Conquest foundation of the middle of the eleventh century.⁴⁸⁷ In 1090 it was given by Gilbert of Clare to the monastery of Bec in Normandy, of which it became a cell, before being removed to a new location by Gilbert's son Richard and eventually reverting to its collegiate form.⁴⁸⁸ References to a pilgrimage are once again sparse. One of the men sent out by Elizabeth of

⁴⁸³ Parker, *History of Melford*, p. 77

⁴⁸⁴ Suffolk Heritage Explorer, <https://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/hbsmr-web/record.aspx?UID=MSF13783-Church-of-All-Saints&pageid=16&mid=9>, accessed on 03.02.16

⁴⁸⁵ Suffolk Record Office, HD 2448/1/1/255/1

⁴⁸⁶ Goult, W., *A Survey of Suffolk Parish History*, (Suffolk County Council, 1990), <https://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/Data/Sites/1/media/parish-histories/stanton.pdf>, accessed on 04.02.16

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 154

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid

York to go on pilgrimages to pray for the healing of her son visited Stoke-by-Clare in 1502 and offered 20d. at the shrine of “oure lady of Stokeclare”.⁴⁸⁹ In the wardrobe accounts of Elizabeth, it is mentioned together with Sudbury, Woolpit and Ipswich and seems to have been yet another of the numerous Marian shrines peppering the late medieval Suffolk landscape. It is impossible to gauge the popularity of the shrine on such isolated references, but within the wardrobe account it merits the same level of donation as Woolpit, but only two thirds of the amount given to Sudbury and half that offered at Ipswich. The level of donations offered can be taken as a tentative acknowledgement of the perceived efficacy of the different Marian shrines. It must be mentioned that Marian devotion did not necessarily account for all the pilgrim traffic to Stoke-by-Clare. An undated letter of Roger, earl of Clare (d. 1173), entrusted several unspecified relics to the care of the house. A miracle related to St. Thomas of Canterbury is recorded in relation with Roger, namely that James, Roger’s son, had fallen grievously ill, and was only cured after his mother had placed a relic of Thomas Becket in his mouth.⁴⁹⁰ The whole story is fraught with difficulty; no son of Roger named James is otherwise known from the records and the miracle must have occurred post-1170, seventeen years after the birth of his son Richard, at a time when his wife may have been thought beyond childbearing age. These relics can also be found mentioned in the cartulary of the monastic foundation where the same Roger requests that those who encounter them give offerings in aid of the ‘newly commenced’ work at the priory.⁴⁹¹ It seems that the relics may have been paraded in the locality as part of a tour to raise funds for building work at the priory. No other direct evidence can be found for those relics or of another shrine at Stoke-by-Clare save for the fact that within the parish of Stoke-by-Clare there remains a ‘Chapel Street’ and a ‘Chapel

⁴⁸⁹ Harris Nicholas, *Privy Purse Expenses*, p. 3

⁴⁹⁰ Robertson, J. C., ed., *Materials for the Study of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury*, Volume I, (London, 1875), pp. 228-9

⁴⁹¹ *Rogerus comes Clare episcopis et archidiaconis acque decanis omnibusque suis vicinis et amicis salutem. Noverit dileccio vestra has reliquias et earum iubilatores esse de domo mea de Stok', quam antecessores mei in honore Sancti Iohannis Baptiste fundaverunt et ecclesie Beccensi in elemosinam contulerunt. Eapropter vestram benevolentiam imploro quatinus si aliquando ad vos devenerint, eas et earum latores honorifice pro Dei amore et mei suscipiatis. Preterea omnibus meis hominibus divitibus et pauperibus, clericis et laicis, sive ministris precipio ut predictas reliquias cum earum latoribus studiose et cum summa reverencia suscipiant. Et si ad opus in predicto loco, scilicet Stok', noviter incepit aliquid de sua substancia in elemosinam transmiserint, grates eis refero et Deus in eterna vita eis centuplum restituet*, Harper-Bill, C. & Mortimer, R., eds., *Stoke by Clare Cartulary, BL Cotton Appx. Xxi*, 3 vols, Volume 1, (Woodbridge, 1982-4), p. 24

Field Farm',⁴⁹² to the south of which evidence can be found for the remains of an "apparently unrecorded"⁴⁹³ church or chapel. It is therefore not inconceivable that at one time a chapel of ease or some similar structure with a possible connection to St. Thomas (as recorded elsewhere across East Anglia) stood on this spot. The connection is however extremely tenuous and must remain so until further evidence can be uncovered.

1.10. Sudbury

Mention of the statue of 'Our Lady of Sudbury' and pilgrimages made to her shrine are comparatively numerous in the available records. The shrine was housed in the church of St. Gregory in Sudbury, one of three medieval parish churches in the town. The present church is the latest in a series of buildings conceivably reaching back into the middle Anglo-Saxon period. The first secure attestation of St. Gregory's comes from circa 960 with a will of one Aethelric and his bequest of land to St. Gregory's.⁴⁹⁴ The church is also mentioned, as the mother church for Sudbury, in the Domesday Book.⁴⁹⁵ The church underwent a series of major re-buildings and alterations throughout the fourteenth, fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.⁴⁹⁶ The origin of 'Our Lady of Sudbury' as a pilgrimage destination is however much more obscure. Its apogee seems certainly to have occurred late, namely in the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, when a number of prominent pilgrims patronised the shrine. John Howard visited the shrine as a pilgrim in 1482 and 1483⁴⁹⁷ and in 1502 Elizabeth of York sent one William Barton on numerous pilgrimages to pray for the healing of her firstborn son Arthur, one of which took him "to oure lady of Sudbury".⁴⁹⁸ It seems conceivable and indeed likely, that the institution of

⁴⁹²Ancient Roam, www.digimap.edina.ac.uk, Map extent 571944, 242258 (SW) to 575580, 244272 (NE), accessed on 15.09.15

⁴⁹³ Scheduled Ancient Monument SF 157, Suffolk Heritage Explorer, www.heritage.suffolk.gov.uk, Entry SBC 011, accessed on 15.09.15

⁴⁹⁴The Electronic Sawyer, www.esawyer.org.uk/charter/1501, accessed on 07.09.15

⁴⁹⁵The Domesday Book Online, www.domesdaybook.co.uk/suffolk6, accessed on 07.09.15

⁴⁹⁶Suffolk Heritage Explorer, www.heritage.suffolk.gov.uk, Entry SUY 032, accessed on 07.09.15 & The Suffolk Churches Site, www.suffolkchurches.co.uk/sudburystg., accessed on 07.09.15

⁴⁹⁷Ashdown-Hill, J., *Richard III's 'Beloved Cousyn': John Howard and the House of York*, (Stroud, 2009), pp. 167-168

⁴⁹⁸Harris Nicholas, *Privy Purse Expenses*, p. 3

the shrine coincided with the foundation of the college of St. Gregory by the ill-fated archbishop Simon of Sudbury and his brother John in 1375, during which time they acquired the advowson of the church of St. Gregory.⁴⁹⁹ A lead pilgrim ampulla with a reversed S below a crown has been found in Witnesham in Suffolk which may have originated at the shrine in Sudbury.⁵⁰⁰ Production and sale of such ampullae at the Sudbury shrine would indicate at least a certain level of sustained popularity to make such souvenirs profitable.

1.11. Woolpit

The church of St. Mary in Woolpit is often cited as having been a subsidiary, yet nevertheless very popular, Marian shrine in a region so well endowed with such locations. Parts of the present fabric of the church date to the fourteenth century, with later perpendicular additions. During the re-building of the tower in the middle of the nineteenth century Norman stonework was discovered at its base.⁵⁰¹ The shrine of Our Lady at Woolpit is first mentioned in a mandate of the bishop of Norwich dating to 1211x14 apportioning all income derived there from pilgrims' offerings to the monks of Bury St. Edmunds.⁵⁰² By 1286 a fair was in existence there, held on the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary.⁵⁰³ It therefore seems probable that the original dedication of the church was to the Nativity of the Virgin, rather than simply to St. Mary. The popularity of this pilgrimage during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries cannot be recounted in any detail and must remain a matter of conjecture until further evidence comes to light. A miracle mentioned in the account of the shrine of the Lady chapel of Thetford priory by the Thetford monk John Brame may however give some indication:

“There was another woman in Thetford, who laboured under daily infirmity, till she was almost brought to her grave; and what is wonderful to be heard, she was seized in her

⁴⁹⁹ Page, W., ed., *A History of the County of Suffolk: Volume 2*, (London, 1975), p. 150

⁵⁰⁰ www.heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/hbsmr-web/record.aspx?UID=MSF9176, accessed on 07.09.15

⁵⁰¹ www.heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/MSF2028, accessed on 05.05.16

⁵⁰² Harper-Bill, C., ed., *English Episcopal Acta, Norwich 1070-1214*, Volume VI, (Oxford, 1990), p. 268

⁵⁰³ Hervey, F., ed., *The Pinchbeck Register*, Volume 2, (Brighton, 1925), p. 151

tongue in such a manner, that it was drawn back into her throat, so that she had lost all use of speech and power of moving her tongue, but had use of her other members. While she was in that state, some benevolent persons gave her a small sum of money, and for the recovery of her health, endeavoured to persuade her to go to Woolpit, and there offer it to the image of the glorious virgin; but the woman gave signs of reluctance, and pointed with her hand to the monastery [Thetford priory]...Immediately after the woman had made an end of offering [at Thetford priory], the use of her tongue was restored, and she spake immediately..."⁵⁰⁴

John Brame sets this miracle story in the middle of the twelfth century, but the account was written in the early fifteenth century and is therefore more likely to reflect historical realities and attitudes of that time. Such tales of the impotence of one shrine over another are common, although they more usually concern competing saints and not competing locations of the same Saint. The implication however is clear; John Brame wished to extol the superiority of Our Lady of Thetford over her image at Woolpit. Equally clear is the implication conveyed by the 'benevolent persons' that, by the early fifteenth century, Woolpit seemed to have been the default Marian shrine for this part of central East Anglia. Woolpit is situated less than fifteen miles south of Thetford and it is easy to see that a keen sense of rivalry between two reasonably popular Marian shrines in such close proximity was unavoidable. It can therefore be conjectured that popularity of this shrine grew throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and had attained regional status by the time of John Brame. As can be seen from examples where the evidence for annual offerings was preserved in obedientiary rolls not every Marian shrine or chapel followed this trend; indeed, the evidence for all the Marian images in the care of monastic communities in East Anglia shows a downward trend throughout the fifteenth century (with the exception of Walsingham, and the Red Mount chapel at King's Lynn, which was not built until the 1480s and clearly retained a good deal of popularity into the sixteenth century, see King's Lynn). Many of these images can be said to have lost virtually all support, with offerings of no more than a few pence received every year (i.e.

⁵⁰⁴ Martin, T. & Gough, R., eds., *The History of the town of Thetford, in the Counties of Norfolk and Suffolk, from the earliest Accounts to the present time*, (London, 1779), p. 83 (Appendix)

Norwich Cathedral or Great Yarmouth). The trend emerging from the admittedly fragmentary evidence is one of a divergence of two types of focal points for Marian pilgrimage and devotion: on the one hand there are the above mentioned long established shrines in the care of monastic communities, which entered a long period of decline often from as early as the middle of the fourteenth century, on the other there emerges a new kind of shrine, usually situated in the local parish church or even a subsidiary chapel, such as at Long Melford or Ipswich. These latter types of shrines appeared to gain popularity throughout the later middle ages and seemingly supplanted the older pilgrimage locations. Woolpit appears to fall into this category and it can be conjectured that pilgrimage to this shrine increased throughout the fourteenth century. The majority of the evidence for the popularity of this shrine throughout the fifteenth century comes from wills and increases as the century progresses. This may be due to an increase in the popularity of the pilgrimage, but could equally well be simply a distortion imposed by the widening evidence base. The number of surviving bequests is unusually high and the quality of the items and the amounts of money willed to the image of Our Lady at Woolpit suggests a shrine of more than merely local importance. In 1443, John Petyt bequeathed "a sceptre to be put in the hand...of the blessed Virgin Mary...[and] all the jewels, complete, that have come to me in my time".⁵⁰⁵ Among many other items later testators left diamond rings, "a girdle...harnessed with silver",⁵⁰⁶ "a pair of beads of thrice sixty, gawdied with silver, and three gold rings"⁵⁰⁷ and John Howard, later Duke of Norfolk, made an offering of £7 and 9s. to the image in 1481.⁵⁰⁸ It is also included in the itinerary of the persons sent out by Elizabeth, the wife of Henry VII, to pray for her son Arthur in 1502. There seems little doubt then that the image of Our Lady of Woolpit enjoyed local, regional and certainly to some degree national popularity during the last half century before the dissolution, although the assertion made by Northeast that, the shrine "was almost as popular as Walsingham"⁵⁰⁹ may be difficult to support. Indications for a secondary focal point for Marian devotion exist in the form of a well north-east of St.

⁵⁰⁵ Paine, C., 'The Chapel and Well of Our Lady of Woolpit', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* XXXVIII (1993), pp. 8-12, p. 8

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid

⁵⁰⁹ Northeast, P., ed., *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury, 1439-1471: I*, (Woodbridge, 2001), p. 377

Mary's church. The well is marked within a moat as Lady's Well on nineteenth century OS maps.⁵¹⁰ Many such supposed Holy Wells can be found in East Anglia (see Holy Wells and appendix 9, locations of holy wells) and often they, and their legends, are the product of the enterprising nature of Victorian antiquaries, much more than the remnants of long defunct pilgrimage sites. In the case of the Woolpit Lady Well there may however be an underlying historical truth to these later attributions. Clive Paine has made a convincing argument for the existence of the well itself as early as the late thirteenth century.⁵¹¹ The first direct mention of this well comes from a manorial survey of Woolpit manor of the middle of the sixteenth century, where it is designated as 'Our Ladys Well'.⁵¹² Given the religious climate, it is highly improbable that this designation came into being in the years between the dissolution and the manorial survey.⁵¹³ The well, almost certainly was known as Our Lady's Well in the late medieval period. It seems reasonable to assume that it was appended to the Marian shrine during the height of its popularity in the fifteenth or early sixteenth century. A work on the landscape surrounding Bury St. Edmunds, published anonymously in 1827 mentions that the well "is used occasionally for the immersion of weakly children, and much resorted to by persons of weak eyes".⁵¹⁴ How far this must be seen as a confabulation on the part of the author to describe what a holy well should be used for, a local custom of the nineteenth century or a relic of earlier lore cannot now be determined.

⁵¹⁰ <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>, accessed on 05.05.16

⁵¹¹ Paine utilized land rental and lay subsidy records to trace a number of individuals whose surnames are a clear indicator of this well, such as 'atte Welle', 'ad fontem' and 'de fonte', Paine, *Chapel and Well of Our Lady*, p. 10

⁵¹² Suffolk Record Office, E7/16/2, f. 120v

⁵¹³ Waller suggests that this well should be seen as another site were "nostalgic medievalism" led to the invention of elaborate traditions, rather than a secondary locus of medieval Marian veneration at Woolpit, Waller, G., *The Virgin Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern English Literature and Popular Culture*, (Cambridge, 2011), p. 88

⁵¹⁴ Anonymous, *A Concise Description of Bury Saint Edmund's and its Environs*, (London, 1827), p. 360

2.1. Bawburgh

The history of the medieval shrine of St. Walstan at Bawburgh has aroused significant interest among historians and antiquaries throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Unusually for a relatively modest cult of a local saint not one, but two medieval Lives of St. Walstan survive. In terms of East Anglian pilgrimage history these documents constitute a veritable treasure trove of information. The two accounts of Walstan's life broadly tally and any significant differences will be dealt with below. The Latin life was first published in Wynkyn de Worde's edition of Capgrave's *Nova Legenda Angliae*⁵¹⁵ in 1516. It was one of the fifteen new lives added by de Worde to the earlier manuscripts of the collections of saint's lives by Tynemouth and Capgrave. The author's autograph manuscript of this Latin life is lost, but examination of evidence preserved in the rolls of Norwich Cathedral priory suggests a thirteenth or fourteenth century date of composition for such a text. The rectory of Bawburgh was acquired by Norwich Cathedral priory in 1235.⁵¹⁶ The dedication of the church at this time, as indeed it still is today, was St. Mary and St. Walstan, suggesting an already established cult of St. Walstan in this period. It is certainly possible that Norwich priory, keen to expand its portfolio of indigenous saints, took an active interest in the promotion of the shrine and that a life of the saint was produced sometime after 1235. In 1320 the chancel was rebuilt or renovated at considerable cost to the priory.⁵¹⁷ As is always the case when significant expenditure takes place to beautify or re-build a shrine or the church housing it, the question that must be asked is this: Did these works suggest that the shrine was flourishing and money obtained from offerings was re-invested, or did they represent the relative failure of a shrine and an attempt to revive its fortunes? No clear answer to this question can be arrived at, but circumstantial evidence may point towards either the former or indeed towards two possibilities hitherto largely ignored by historians writing on this subject.

⁵¹⁵ Horstman, C., ed., *Nova Legenda Anglie*, (Oxford, 1901), p. ix

⁵¹⁶ Saunders, H. W., ed., *The First Register of Norwich Cathedral Priory*, (Norwich, 1939), p. 210/11

⁵¹⁷ Halliday, R., 'St. Walstan of Bawburgh', *Norfolk Archaeology* XLIV 2003, pp.: 316-323, p.: 319, Duffy suggests the year 1309 for the building work and also asserts that the rest of the church was at the same time redecorated using pilgrim's offerings, but does not cite his sources for this, Duffy, E., *The Stripping of the Altars*, (London, 1992), pp. 200-1

Evidence from wills, rood screens and St. Walstan's English verse life suggest that the cult was clearly flourishing throughout the later medieval period right up to the cataclysmic changes wrought during Henry VIII's reign. Walstan's cult appears largely 'fashion resistant', unaffected by the obvious downturn in activity seen during the fifteenth century at many established shrines. Accepting for a moment the hypothesis that the cult was already popular at the time the monks of Norwich Cathedral Priory became its custodians it seems unlikely that the expenditure of 1320 represents a rescue operation for a failing cult (given its subsequent durability) and more likely that this was seen as investment in an already flourishing one. However, the evidence for the cult prior to this date is sparse in the extreme. Pestell raises the intriguing possibility that a monastic community was in existence at Bawburgh prior to the conquest, based on a metal detectorist find in 2002. The object uncovered is an inscribed lead sheet, similar in appearance to other such finds, which have been identified as funerary markers in use by monastic communities during the late Anglo-Saxon period.⁵¹⁸ Apart from this admittedly tantalizing, but far from conclusive find and the pre-existing dedication we have only the date provided by his two lives that the cult of St. Walstan was established in the year 1016. Neither life, as will be seen below, contains any historical evidence concerning pre-conquest East Anglia. They must be seen as purely hagiographical fictions of a later age. It may therefore be the case that the cult in the thirteenth century was at best embryonic and of a much more recent date than previously assumed and that the work carried out by Norwich Cathedral Priory and the creation of the first life are the beginnings of the cult proper of St. Walstan. The pre-dating of the hagiographical narrative to the pre-conquest period may merely be a literary device to lend antiquity and gravitas, as for example was the case at Walsingham. It may equally be the case that the cult is of pre-conquest origin, but was entirely lapsed by this time and the only vestige of the veneration of St. Walstan was the church bearing his name. Despite the relative wealth of material relating to St. Walstan and his cult the historical reality behind it is largely obscure. It is by no means clear whether St. Walstan was a historical figure at all. G. E. Fox, writing in the second

⁵¹⁸ Pestell, T., *Landscapes of Monastic Foundation, The Establishment of Religious Houses in East Anglia, c. 650-1200*, (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 146-7

volume of the Victoria County History for Norfolk likens him to a “pagan divinity”⁵¹⁹ and Trefor Jones expands on this idea to present Walstan as a syncretic amalgamation of Celtic, Romano-British, Anglo-Saxon and Danish pagan traditions superimposed with a thin veneer of Christianity in the shape of the fictional Walstan during the reign of King Cnut.⁵²⁰ As evidence Jones cites the laws of Cnut,⁵²¹ which he sees as the trigger to the *inventio* of the fictional Walstan (but preserving the elements of well and stone worship mentioned in Cnut’s laws in his very name). The suggestion itself may warrant closer inspection, but the implicit assertion that Irish, Welsh, Germanic and Danish pagan traditions are equally and neatly combined in the later medieval hagiographical tradition of St. Walstan does not really merit serious consideration. According to the Latin life St. Walstan was born in the ‘southern part of Great Britain in the village of Bawburg’⁵²² to royal parents named Benedict and Blida. Of Benedict nothing else is known, but Blida (alternatively spelled Blithe or Blyth) had a chapel dedicated to her at Martham (see Martham).⁵²³ He renounced his claims to his royal inheritance and went to the village of Taverham to work as a farm labourer. After an indeterminate period of time an angel appeared to St. Walstan and predicted his death and entry into paradise in three days’ time. After his death his body was laid on a cart and drawn by two bull calves to Bawburgh, where his body was buried in the church that bears his name. These (besides a few miraculous interludes) are the bare bones of his life according to his Latin hagiography. What is noticeable within the Life is that almost no extraneous historical detail of any kind is provided that could anchor the tale temporally. Where detail is provided it is patently nonsensical, as is the case with the assertion that he was of royal

⁵¹⁹ G. E. Fox, ‘Medieval Painting’, in Page, W., ed., *The Victoria County History of Norfolk*, Volume 2, p. 544

⁵²⁰ Jones, T., *The English Saints, East Anglia*, (Norwich, 1999), pp. 183-187

⁵²¹ “It is heathen practice if one worships idols, namely if one worships heathen gods and the sun or the moon, fire or flood, wells or stones or any kind of forest trees”, Whitelock, D., ed., *English Historical Documents, Volume I c. 500-1042*, (Oxford, 1996), p. 455

⁵²² Sanctus Walstanus Deo acceptus, australi in parte Maioris Britannie in villa de Bawburg oriundus, ex stirpe regia, patre scilicet Benedicto, matre vero Blida nomine, preclarum duxit originem, James, ‘Lives of St. Walstan’, p. 244

⁵²³ James suggested, that the English Life’s assertion that Walstan’s birthplace was ‘Blyborow’ (Blythburgh, Suffolk) had some merit, and an obvious connection with his supposed mother Blyth/Blida seems therefore inescapable. There is however no supporting evidence for this connection, and the town’s name almost certainly derives from the river Blyth, which also gives its name to nearby Blyford, Suffolk and Blyth Haven (Southwold, Suffolk). The nominative similarities can be accounted for by their derivation from OE *blithe* (gentle, pleasant). The names of Walstan’s supposed parents, Benedict and Blida (i.e. blessed and gentle), are indicative of the attributes of the St. Walstan, but do not reflect any kind of historical reality.

lineage, given that the East Anglian royal line came to an end in the second half of the ninth century. The overall impression is that the author of the original manuscript of this Life had very little detail to go on and constructed an all-purpose royal back story to lend the essentially peasant like figure of Walstan authority. The rest of the narrative is a fairly unremarkable *imitatio Christi* set in the agricultural milieu familiar to the intended late medieval rural labouring audience. This is consistent with the suggestion that the first manuscript of this hagiography was produced as a result of the Cathedral Priory's involvement at Bawburgh, but less so with the idea that the cult of St. Walstan was already flourishing at this time. It might be assumed that the successive custodians of an active and sizeable cult had retained and gathered a greater amount of material relating to its saint, than that which is evident from St. Walstan's hagiography. The contention therefore must be that the Latin life in its original iteration did not represent the carefully edited and formalized version of a sprawling oral narrative developed over more than two centuries, but rather an *inventio*, or more accurately given the evidence of the dedication of Bawburgh church, a *reinventio* of a largely lapsed and forgotten cult. The English Life of St. Walstan preserves a number of posthumous miracles worked by him. As is common in late medieval collections, the miracles are all concerned with healing. The Life records eleven miracles spanning the usual range of afflictions from lunacy to lameness, a variety of unspecified 'aches' and even the revival of a drowned man. A number of the miracles are rather curious and are seemingly included not so much to further the fame and reputation of St. Walstan, but to entertain the visiting faithful. The first of these concerns a woman from Bawburgh who was accidentally shot with an arrow. After being brought to his shrine she revived somewhat and ate some cockles which promptly re-appeared tumbling out of her arrow wound.⁵²⁴ The very next miracle in the collection tells of a priest from nearby Honingham who had a "wenne"⁵²⁵ growing on his body. After visiting St. Walstan's shrine to no avail he walked home and suddenly "felt a moysture in his hose: broken was ye wenne. To ye place he looked, ye guts appeared out".⁵²⁶ Both those miracles combine the distressing, the lurid, the humorous and the miraculous. They are

⁵²⁴ Ibid, pp. 258-9

⁵²⁵ Ibid, a 'wenne' is a lump or growth, but its meaning can also infer a spiritual blemish, Lewis, R. E., ed., *Middle English Dictionary*, (Ann Arbor, 1999), p. 295

⁵²⁶ James, 'Lives of Walstan', p. 260

not intended to edify, but rather to titillate and entertain. The miracle of the priest in particular seems almost mischievous; the possible double meaning of ‘wenne’ as a physical, as well as a spiritual blemish, the location of the growth, which although not clearly spelled out is implicitly located around the priest’s buttocks and the incident of the ‘moysture in his hose’ all add up to an impish narrative intended to poke fun at the poor unfortunate. These miracles are not intended for the rarefied and learned milieu of the cloister and the scriptorium, but for the rural populace visiting the shrine. In stark contrast to the almost identikit nature of the Latin life, these miracles also preserve a wealth of local information. In most instances the location from which the pilgrims set out towards Bawburgh is supplied (they are almost all in the vicinity of Bawburgh, see figure 40 below). Occasionally even a name is given. The sixth miracle records the “knight S[i]r Gregory Lovell”,⁵²⁷ who was healed of a ‘bone ache’ after washing himself with water from the well of St. Walstan.

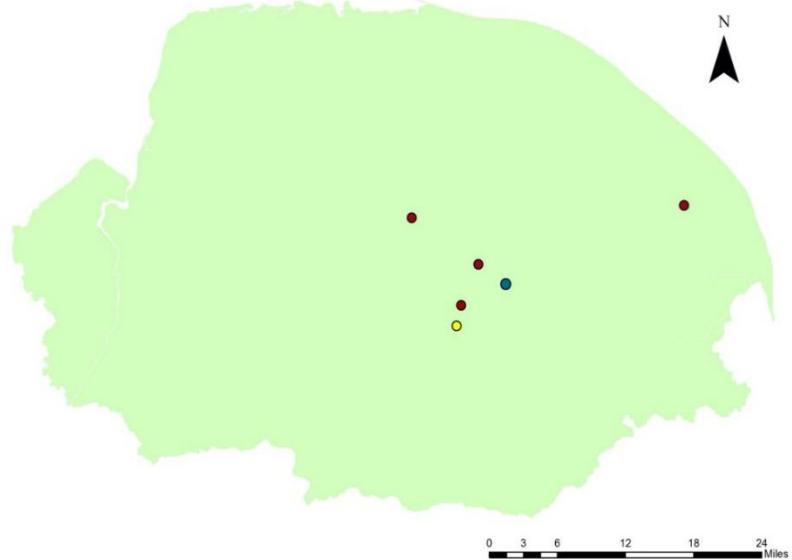


Figure 40: Locations of pilgrims who experienced cures at the shrine of St. Walstan at Bawburgh⁵²⁸ (blue dot: Bawburgh, yellow dot: uncertain identification of ‘Crowthorpe’ with Crownthorpe, Wicklewood)

⁵²⁷ Ibid, p. 261

⁵²⁸ Map by author, compiled from evidence in James, ‘Lives of St. Walstan’

This at least provides a *terminus a quo* for the collection as well as for the association of St. Walstan with the well bearing his name in the vicinity of the church at Bawburgh.

Gregory Lovell was the lord of the manor of Barton Bendish in Norfolk and he was knighted in 1491, which therefore must be seen as the earliest possible date for the creation of the English Life. His will is dated to 1507⁵²⁹ and assuming a contemporaneous or at least near contemporaneous date for the recording of the miracles it may be inferred that the collection dates from either the last decade of the fifteenth or the first decade of the sixteenth century. Eight of the eleven miracles give the starting location of the supplicants and in all but two of these cases this is within a ten-mile radius of St. Wastan's shrine at Bawburgh. The exception for Norfolk is a pilgrim from "Flegge",⁵³⁰ some twenty miles to the east of Bawburgh. Flegg lies in the parish of Martham, where St. Walstan's mother Blyth was venerated, which may explain this atypical outlier. The only non-local, or even regional pilgrim is a weaver from Canterbury. In the account of the miracle he experienced at St. Walstan's shrine the author of the English Life introduces another common hagiographical *topos*, namely that of the inability of the saint at another shrine to effect a miracle, where the local saint can. The weaver had for "many a day"⁵³¹ prayed at the shrine of St. Thomas at Canterbury, but had experienced no relief until a pilgrim from Norfolk urged him to seek out St. Walstan, who promptly cured him. As mentioned this is a relatively common narrative, but it may be noted that it is yet another piece of evidence towards the evident dissatisfaction towards long established and previously extremely popular shrines and cult centres in favour of either new or smaller pilgrimage *loci*. The evidence of this verse Life coupled with the rood screen, stained glass and stone depictions of St. Walstan painstakingly uncovered by the local historian Carol Twinch⁵³² must lead to the assumption that St. Walstan was, while being geographically rather restricted, nevertheless a popular late medieval East Anglian saint. The emphasis in his cult on rural labour clearly struck a chord with the labouring populace of the region,

⁵²⁹ National Archives, PROB 11/15/494

⁵³⁰ James, 'Lives of Walstan', p. 264

⁵³¹ Ibid, p. 262

⁵³² For details regarding the distribution of art historical and architectural remnants of his cult throughout medieval East Anglia and beyond see Twinch, C., *In Search of St. Walstan*, (Lavenham, 1995), Twinch, C., *Saint with the Silver Shoes: The Continuing Search for St. Walstan*, (Lavenham, 2004) and Twinch, C., *Saint Walstan, The Third Search*, (Lavenham, 2015)

but this quite literally pagan emphasis also laid the cult open to criticisms of syncretism and heresy. The East Anglian reformer John Bale, who was born near Dunwich in Suffolk and spent time with the Carmelite Friars at Norwich, and who therefore most likely knew the shrine from personal experience, described it thus:

“Saynte Walstane of Bawburgh iii. Miles from Norwych, was neyther Monke nor Prest, yet vo[w]ed he (they say) to lyve Chast without a Wyfe, and perfourmed that Promyse, by Fastynge of the Frydaye and good Sayntes Uygyls without any other Grace or Gyft gyven of God. He dyed in the Yeare of our Lord a M. and xvi. in the thyrde Calendes of June, and became after the maner of Priapus the God of their Feldes in Northfolke, and Gyde of their [H]aruestes. al Mo[w]ers and Sythe folowers sekyng hym ones in the Yeare. Loke his Legende in the Cataloge of Johan Capgrave, Provyncyall of the Augustyne Fryeres, and ye shal finde there, that both Men and Beastes which had lost their Prevy Parts, had newe Members again restored to them, by this Walstane. Marke thys kynde of Myracles. for your Learnynge, I thynke Ye have seldome redde the lyke.”⁵³³



Figure 41: Alms box, most likely of the seventeenth century in the church of St. Walstan at Bawburgh⁵³⁴

⁵³³ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 2, p. 389

⁵³⁴ Image used with the kind permission of Simon Knott, www.norfolkchurches.co.uk

There is no indication in either Life of St. Walstan that the restoration of male genitalia was connected to the cult of St. Walstan, but Trefor Jones seizes on the slur and identifies a pillar type alms box (most likely dating to the seventeenth century) as a twelfth century example of a pilgrim offerings box in the shape of a phallus (see figure 41 above), adding Greek mythology to the already heady mix of pagan influences supposedly coming together in the cult of St. Walstan.

In summary it can be said that the cult of St. Walstan was something of a rarity among the many shrines of medieval East Anglia. If one gives credence to the pre-conquest origins of the shrine, his was one of the very few Anglo-Saxon cults still flourishing at the eve of the Reformation, but not wholly part of a monastic community (as for example St. Edmund), but in the guise of a late medieval parish church shrine, albeit under the guardianship of Norwich Cathedral Priory. The fragmentary evidence also leads to the conclusion that perhaps his cult did not enjoy a continued popularity from the eleventh to the sixteenth century, but was in abeyance in the immediate post-conquest period and was revived in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to suit the devotional behaviour of the late medieval rural populace.

2.2. Bixley

The church dedication of St. Wandregesilius at Bixley to the south of Norwich is the only one in the county as well as the country as a whole.⁵³⁵ A pilgrimage at Bixley is attested by the will of Margaret Est, dating from 1484: "And the same Thomas at my desyre hath promised me to go for me certeyn pylgremage, yt is to sey, in my lyf to the holy seynt Wandrede; and aft my dissease he xall go unto seynt Thomas of Canterbury".⁵³⁶ Norfolk's most prolific proxy pilgrim, Alice Cooke, equally left a bequest for a visit to his shrine in 1478. But St. Wandregesilius was also venerated in other churches in this region. Alfred

⁵³⁵ A church with the dedication of St. Wandrille is known to have existed in London before 1181, Keene, D. & Harding, V., eds., *A Survey of Documentary Sources for Property Holding in London before the Great Fire*, London Record Society, Volume 22, (London, 1985), p. 232

⁵³⁶ Harrod, H., 'Extracts from Early Wills in the Norwich Registries', *Norfolk Archaeology* IV (1855), pp.: 317-339, p. 338

Suckling, writing on Mettingham College in Suffolk states that “the fame of St. Wandered, whose image also was here, attracted an annual peregrination to his shrine”.⁵³⁷ Another image is known from St. Nicholas’ church in Great Yarmouth (see Great Yarmouth). As to the beginnings of the cult in Bixley, very little can be said other than that the present church stands on an Anglo-Saxon site and may originally have been a minster.⁵³⁸ It was rebuilt in 1272, but no information as to whether its dedication was changed survives. Fontenelle Abbey, St. Wandregesilius’ own foundation is in Normandy and at first sight it seems that his may be a cult introduced at some time after the Conquest.⁵³⁹ It is however equally plausible that the dedication is pre-conquest; St. Wandregesilius is commemorated in at least three pre-conquest Anglo-Saxon calendars⁵⁴⁰ and apparently relics of him were, in the tenth and eleventh century, kept at Canterbury and Abingdon.⁵⁴¹ Indeed, the peak of his popularity in England may have occurred before rather than after the Norman Conquest. Accepting that Bixley is the site of an Anglo-Saxon minster dedicated to St. Wandregesilius, local devotion to him could by the fifteenth century already have had a pedigree spanning some seven to five hundred years. Assuming this to be the case, his cult seemed to be astonishingly unaffected by changes in devotional practices and the arrival and rise in popularity of ‘new’ saints. It appears that St. Wandregesilius never crossed the threshold into true regional significance, but devotion to him seems to have been steadfastly maintained for a sustained period. The progress of his cult at Bixley is more reminiscent of the patterns of devotion inspired by local saints, and it may be the case that St. Wandragesilius had by virtue of his long presence in the locality acquired the status of a proxy local saint. A similar process (albeit reversed) can also be observed in the possible conflation of the legend and veneration of the murdered Margaret with the universally venerated St. Margaret (see Hoveton).

⁵³⁷ Suckling, A., *The History and Antiquities of the County of Suffolk, Volume 1*, (London, 1846), p. 176

⁵³⁸ www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/MNF1859, accessed on 04.08.12

⁵³⁹ St. Wandragesilius, also known as St. Wandrille or St. Wandred in England, was a seventh century Merovingian saint renowned for his asceticism and his monastery at Fontanelle, which came to be known as Saint-Wandrille established at least three cells in England, Farmer, *Dictionary of Saints*, p. 533

⁵⁴⁰ Heslop, T. A., ‘The Canterbury Calendars and the Norman Conquest’ in Eales, R. & Sharpe, R., eds., *Canterbury and the Norman Conquest, Churches, Saints and Scholars, 1066-1109*, (London, 1995), p. 79

⁵⁴¹ Nun Macrina (trans.), *The Vita Prima of St. Wandregesilius*, (Mettingham, 2011), p. 6

2.3. Bracondale

Blomefield asserts that here was “a chapel placed on the hill, which was much frequented by fishermen and watermen, who used to come hither to offer to good St. Nicholas, their patron saint, to whose honour this chapel was dedicated”.⁵⁴² The chapel was demolished in the sixteenth century and no trace of it survives today. As evidence for this chapel’s popularity he cites lead tokens depicting St. Nicholas which, according to Blomefield, were given to pilgrims who had made an “agreeable offering”⁵⁴³ at the shrine. The tokens Blomefield depicts in his work are not however pilgrim badges or anything of the kind. They are so called ‘boy-bishop’ tokens. The bulk of these tokens seem to have been produced in Bury St. Edmunds in the period between 1485 and 1535.⁵⁴⁴ A mould for the production of these tokens was found at Bury and the tokens depicted in Blomefield appear to be of the same or a very similar type. Their usage is unclear, but it seems that they were distributed during the reign of the boy bishop (from the 6th until 28th of December) and may have been used as tokens redeemable at the issuing abbey’s almonry or, as Rigold suggests, as a kind of festive coinage usable during this season at any merchant or stallholder who was willing to participate.⁵⁴⁵

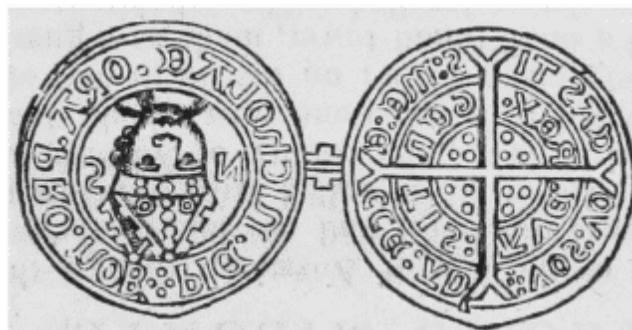


Figure 42: Copy of boy-bishop tokens identified erroneously by Blomefield as pilgrim badges from the chapel of St. Nicholas, Bracondale⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴² Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 4, p. 523

⁵⁴³ Ibid

⁵⁴⁴ <http://www.stedmundsburychronicle.co.uk/coinsintrotokens.htm>, accessed on 10.03.16 and Rigold, S. E., ‘The St. Nicholas or ‘Boy Bishop’ tokens’, *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute for Archaeology and History* XXXIV (1978), pp. 87-101

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 92

⁵⁴⁶ Image reproduced from www.british-history.ac.uk/topographical-hist-norfolk/vol4/pp523-524, accessed on 05.05.16

The image of St. Nicholas on these tokens most likely refers to the beginning of the boy bishop's reign on his feast day. It is of course possible that in some cases they had a secondary use as amulets in a similar manner to pilgrim badges and ampullae, but a connection with a pilgrimage in honour of St. Nicholas at the Bracondale chapel is certainly a mistake. No other direct evidence for pilgrimage to this site could be found.

2.4. Castle Acre

The Cluniac priory of Castle Acre was founded by William de Warenne sometime between 1087 and 1089.⁵⁴⁷ Castle Acre was the centre of his extensive land holdings in Eastern England and was from its first inception furnished with considerable endowments. The priory was subject to the priory of St. Pancras in Lewes, Sussex (the first Cluniac foundation in England) and therefore ultimately subordinate to the mother house of Cluny. The priory at Castle Acre naturalized (and therefore ceased to be an alien Priory) in 1351.⁵⁴⁸ The first mention of pilgrimage in connection with the priory comes from an indulgence granted by Boniface IX in 1401 and mentions "divers relics of saints...to which a great multitude of people resort".⁵⁴⁹ It seems that one relic in particular, the arm of St. Philip,⁵⁵⁰ was promoted in this priory and the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* indicates that in 1535

⁵⁴⁷ Page, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 2, p. 356

⁵⁴⁸ Bernard, A. & Bruel, A., eds., *Recueil des Chartes de L'Abbaye de Cluny*, Volume 5, (Paris, 1894), p. 781, see also Duckett, G. F., ed., *Charters and records among the archives of the ancient abbey of Cluni from 1077 to 1534, illustrative of the acts of some of our early kings; and all the abbey's English foundations*, (Lewes, 1888), p. 31

⁵⁴⁹" Indulgence of the Portiuncula to penitents who on Passion Sunday, from the first vespers to the second vespers of the Monday (secunde ferie) immediately next following, and on the feast of St. James the Apostle, from the first to the second vespers inclusive, visit the church of the Cluniac priory or monastery of Castellacre, in the diocese of Norwich—in which are divers relics of saints, and to which a great multitude of people resorts—its high altar, and the altar of the said relics, and give alms for the repair or conservation of the church; with indult for the prior and sub-prior and ten other priests, secular or religious, chosen by them, to hear the confessions and give absolution, except in cases reserved to the apostolic see, on the said feasts and day, and also on other two days immediately preceding the said Sunday and feast." Bliss, W. H. & Twemlow, J. A., eds., *Calendar of Papal Registers, 1398-1404*, (London, 1904), p. 414

⁵⁵⁰ The entire body of St. Philip had been brought from Constantinople following the sack of the city in 1204, and a number of these relics made their way to England. The head was presented to Reading Abbey by King John and a foot was given to St. Swithun's, Winchester by Peter des Roches. See Bethell, D., 'The making of a twelfth-century relic collection', *Studies in Church History* 8, (1972), pp. 61-72, p. 64 and Vincent, N., *Peter Des Roches: An Alien in English Politics, 1205-1238*, (Cambridge, 1996), p. 256

ten shillings were received in oblations to this relic.⁵⁵¹ Bloom suggested that the appearance of this arm relic can be attributed to a desire by the Cluniac monks not to have their relic connection eclipsed by the relic of a finger of St. Andrew in the possession of the nearby Augustinian priory of West Acre⁵⁵² (see West Acre). The origins of the finger relic of St. Andrew at West Acre are equally obscure and while Bloom's argument therefore must remain mere supposition, its basic tenets may well hold true and could possibly be applied to a rivalry with another monastic foundation, closely affiliated with Castle Acre. The priory of Bromholm (see Bromholm) was until the end of the twelfth century a subordinate cell of Castle Acre priory and the Bromholm monks' success in creating a focal point for pilgrims with their *veneratio* of a piece of the Holy Cross early in the thirteenth century may well have aroused a certain envy in the Castle Acre community and prompted attempts to emulate it. The relatively paltry sum listed in the 1535 *Valor* and the absence of any concrete evidence pointing towards any large scale and sustained pilgrim activity (with the exception of the likely hyperbolic assertion of 'a great multitude' in the 1401 indulgence of Boniface IX and an isolated mention in a sixteenth century Norwich will⁵⁵³) it seems that the Castle Acre monks failed to arouse more than a passing interest in their precious relic.

2.5. Cringleford

The chapel of St. Ethelbert (commonly referred to as St. Albert's) in Cringleford was appendant to the parish church and was given as an endowment to the newly created hospital of St. Giles by Bishop Walter Suffield in 1246.⁵⁵⁴ St. Ethelbert was the King of Kent at the time of Augustine's arrival (and according to Bede also for a time a *bretwalda*, i.e. the overlord of all the kingdoms south of the Humber⁵⁵⁵). Ethelbert was the first Anglo-

⁵⁵¹ Page, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 2, p. 357

⁵⁵² Bloom, J. H., *Notices, Historical and Antiquarian, of the Castle and Priory Castleacre, in the County of Norfolk*, (London, 1843), p. 154

⁵⁵³ Gregory Clerk, mayor of Norwich in 1505 and 1514 left bequests for a number of pilgrimages, among them to "St. Philip's arm at Castle Acre", see Tanner, N. P., *The Church in late Medieval Norwich, 1370-1532*, (Toronto, 1984), p. 85

⁵⁵⁴ Page, W., *History of Norfolk*, Volume 2, p. 443

⁵⁵⁵ Collins & McClure, *Bede*, p. 39

Saxon leader to be converted to Christianity. A cult of St. Ethelbert existed in all likelihood at his burial place of Canterbury from the seventh century onwards, but beginning in the thirteenth century his popularity, as attested by the inclusion of his feast in calendars of the period,⁵⁵⁶ seems to have grown considerably. In addition to the Cringleford chapel nine other churches and chapels throughout Norfolk were dedicated to him.⁵⁵⁷ The chapel at Cringleford was extensively renovated in 1531,⁵⁵⁸ but fell into disuse following the reformation and was, according to Blomefield, already demolished in the 1730s. Samuel Woodward records the ruined walls of a supposed religious house some two hundred metres east of Cringleford Hall in 1800, which may have been the remains of St. Ethelbert's chapel.⁵⁵⁹ Blomefield also asserts that the chapel was a popular pilgrim destination and that "many came hither on that account",⁵⁶⁰ yet, as is the case in a good number of other supposed popular pilgrimage sites across East Anglia, its fame seems to rest on an isolated bequest for a proxy pilgrimage to be carried out; the testator in this case being one Agnes Parker who made a bequest in 1507 for three pilgrimages to "St. Albert's at Cringleford".⁵⁶¹ Given that Agnes Parker was buried at Cringleford and was clearly a local it seems that this site once again can reasonably safely be relegated to the category of late, local image shrines of limited geographical reach.

2.6. Crostwright

Crostwright is a small settlement in the north-east of Norfolk, some three miles from the former priory of Bromholm. The standing elevation of the church of All Saints dates largely to the fourteenth century, with some evidence of earlier, thirteenth century work.⁵⁶² Its connection to medieval pilgrimage is in the form of an isolated reference in

⁵⁵⁶ Farmer, *Saints*, p. 178

⁵⁵⁷ Linnell, C. L. S., *Norfolk Church Dedications*, (York, 1962), p. 41

⁵⁵⁸ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 5, p. 39

⁵⁵⁹ Norfolk Heritage Explorer, <http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/record-details?mnf5008>, accessed On 24.01.16

⁵⁶⁰ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 5, p. 39

⁵⁶¹ Ibid

⁵⁶² Pevsner & Wilson, *Norfolk 1*, p. 445/6 & Norfolk Heritage Explorer, <http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/record-details?MNF8204-All-Saints>, accessed on 17.02.16

the will of Alice Cooke who left a bequest for “a man to go...to the Holy Rood at Crostewyte”.⁵⁶³ Alice was the wife of Robert Cooke of “Crostweyt”⁵⁶⁴ and obviously had a personal, local connection to the village. Nevertheless Holy Roods were a common devotional object in late medieval parish churches and are known from a variety of locations in East Anglia.⁵⁶⁵ In the church of All Saints are some rare survivals of late fourteenth or early fifteenth century wall paintings depicting the Seven Deadly Sins and the Passion of Christ.⁵⁶⁶ The Crostwight Passion Cycle is among the most noteworthy of such survivals in the country and further furnishes evidence for a possible *locus* of the veneration of the cross at this church. What may set the Holy Rood of Crostwight somewhat apart is its location. Although the settlement itself may have even then consisted of nothing more than a few scattered dwellings it lay on the main approach to Bromholm Priory from the southern overland route. It is very possible that the attendant clergy at the church sought to benefit from any passing pilgrims by the promotion of a related devotional object, i.e. a Holy Rood. Ridlington church a little further to the north of Crostwight may have been the obvious last stopping point for any pilgrims approaching the priory, but the advowson of this church rested with Bromholm from at least the early thirteenth century onwards⁵⁶⁷ and the priory’s clear interest in diverting pilgrim revenues towards their own church and away from subsidiary *loci* in the neighbourhood may have meant that this influence was used to prevent any such attempts, making Crostwight the last stop en route. Further evidence for the possible route northbound pilgrims may have taken towards Bromholm is provided by two medieval stone crosses located respectively south-west and north-east of Crostwight church (NHER 6909 and NHER 8196⁵⁶⁸). The name of the settlement itself suggests some connection with a cross. The name derives

⁵⁶³ Hart, R., ‘The Shrines and Pilgrimages of the County of Norfolk’, *Norfolk Archaeology* VI (1864), pp. 277-294, p. 277

⁵⁶⁴ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 8, p.: 248

⁵⁶⁵ For a cluster of such Good Roods in medieval Suffolk see Midleton-Stewart, J., *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour: Death and Remembrance in the Deanery of Dunwich, Suffolk, 1370-1547*, (Woodbridge, 2001), pp. 131-33

⁵⁶⁶ Medieval Wall Painting in the English Parish Church, <http://www.paintedchurch.org/crostwgt.htm>, accessed on 18.02.16

⁵⁶⁷ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 11, p. 62

⁵⁶⁸ Norfolk Heritage Explorer, <http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/record-details?MNF6909-Site-of-medieval-cross> & <http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/record-details?MNF8196-Medieval-stone-cross-fragment>, accessed on 18.02.16

from Old English or Old Norse (or indeed a mixture between the two) and means 'a clearing with or by a cross' (OE: cros or OScand: kross + OScand: thveit⁵⁶⁹). The name is sufficiently uncommon to merit some attention. Only three instances are recorded from the British Isles. It occurs once in Cumbria (Crosthwaite) and, more pertinently for this present investigation, some ten miles to the south west of Crostwight lies Crostwick (same derivation as above, indeed both villages were sometimes called Crostwick⁵⁷⁰). The cross element of these names cannot however in any way be derived from the Holy Cross of Bromholm since both villages are mentioned in the Domesday Book. No evidence survives to allow us to give any indication of the origins of these crosses in the Anglo-Saxon period. A general rule in the study of place names however is that places which feature a landscape element in their name are named not for common, but for distinguishing or rare features in the landscape. To give an example: A settlement which preserves the 'wood' element in its name is more likely to be found in a sparsely wooded landscape (i.e. Woodhurst in Cambridgeshire, meaning 'wooded hill'; Cambridgeshire not being plentifully supplied with either woods or hills). This tenet combined with the appearance of two such names in close proximity must lead to the conclusion that these crosses were firstly of significance and considerable rarity in the landscape and secondly perhaps part of a connected scheme, possibly an Anglo-Saxon pilgrim route. This argument cannot of course be proven and must remain entirely conjectural, but it may nevertheless supply an answer as to why the by all accounts insignificant and remote priory of Bromholm had such success with its cross relic from the thirteenth century onwards. The veneration of the cross may have had a tradition of extremely long standing in this area by the time the cross relic arrived from Constantinople. Far from being an entirely new cult, this may therefore have simply marked the revival and continuation of an ancient one.

⁵⁶⁹ Rye, J., *A Popular Guide to Norfolk Place Names*, (Fakenham, 1991), p. 8 & Mills, A. D., *Oxford Dictionary of British Place Names*, (Oxford, 2003), p. 142

⁵⁷⁰ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 11 p. 8

2.7. East Dereham

The connection between the Norfolk town of East Dereham and another of King Anna's saintly offspring has a pedigree that on first glance stretches back into the mid Anglo-Saxon period. St. Withburgha, according to her twelfth-century hagiography, founded a monastery at Dereham "soon"⁵⁷¹ after her father's death in battle, that is to say sometime in or around the year 654. This foundation year has long been accepted and is often repeated in historical accounts of Dereham or the legend of St. Withburgha. Yet almost every fact in this account must be briefly subjected to scrutiny before moving to the evidence for her cult and veneration in Dereham. The familial relationship between Anna and Withburgha is far from assured. The hagiography stating that Withburgha was Anna's youngest daughter relates facts about Withburgha's life at a remove of nearly half a millennium and must therefore be viewed with the greatest circumspection. The first textual evidence for Withburgha comes from the ASC (F recension, recorded as a marginal addition), which records under the year 799 (798) how her "body was found entire...after a lapse of five and fifty years from the period of her decease".⁵⁷² Dereham is mentioned as the place of her burial, but no mention is made of her status as a member of the East Anglian Royal Dynasty. Her identification as a daughter of Anna and sister of St. Etheldreda may well owe its genesis to the keen interest of the re-founded monastic community at Ely in the relic cults of indigenous saints in the closing decades of the tenth century.⁵⁷³ It is not inconceivable to assume, as Love tacitly does,⁵⁷⁴ that the family relationship between Anna and the more obscure of his many saintly daughters (such as Withburgha) was an invention of the monks at Ely (see Ely re: abbot Byrthnoth's theft of St. Withburgha's relics from Dereham). If one gives credence in terms of factual accuracy to the ASC over the matter of her exhumation and the time elapsed since her burial, her death must have occurred some time around the year 743. This makes 654 as the year of her foundation of a monastic community at Dereham highly unlikely. 654 was however the likely year of the foundation of St. Botolph's community at Iken, one of the earliest

⁵⁷¹ Love, *Goscelin*, p. 93

⁵⁷² The Online Medieval & Classical Library, <http://omac.org/Anglo/part2.html>, accessed on 10.01.16

⁵⁷³ See Fairweather, *Liber Eliensis*, pp. 102-3 on the devotion of Abbot Byrthnoth to the 'virgin' saints at Ely

⁵⁷⁴ Love, *Goscelin*, p. xviii

and most famous of the early East Anglian monasteries and it is possible that this foundation year was later superimposed on the cult of St. Withburgha and her community at Dereham. If such a community existed, its foundation would more likely have occurred sometime after the turn of the eighth century, which in turn makes it nigh impossible for Withburgha to be one of Anna's daughters. Aside from the problems of placing Withburgha within her kin group and assigning even approximate dates to her life, the place of her monastic foundation is equally less than securely attested. All the textual evidence concerning Withburgha's community refer to Dereham, which could equally well denote the village of West Dereham, some twenty miles to the west. This possibility has been noted by several writers on the subject⁵⁷⁵ and requires some investigation. As well as an absence of conclusive textual evidence, the archaeological evidence is equally lacking. Both places have yielded some finds indicative of activity in the area during the period in question, although in the case of Dereham this is confined to an isolated find of a Middle Anglo-Saxon *sceatta*.⁵⁷⁶ No traces of a pre-conquest monastic foundation have as yet been unearthed in either location. The Domesday entry for Dereham records the interests the Abbey of Ely had in the area and thereby corroborates the twelfth century account in the *Liber Eliensis* regarding Byrthnoth's activities in 974 and confirms that certainly by the tenth century it was Dereham that was identified as the place in which St. Withburgha had founded her community. Additionally, the detailed account given in the *Liber Eliensis* of the return journey of Byrthnoth and his men after the theft of St. Withburgha's remains points towards Dereham as their likely starting point. The *Liber Eliensis* records that they "journey[ed] for twenty miles by an over-land route [before] they came to the river at Brandon".⁵⁷⁷ This would indeed have been the most direct route towards Ely. Starting at West Dereham, Brandon is less than half that distance away and would in any case have presented a significant detour, since the Great Ouse flows only a short distance from West Dereham and would have taken them to Ely along a more direct and safer riverine route. This is of course at best evidence of a suggestive kind, but combined with

⁵⁷⁵ See Pevsner, N. & Wilson, B., *The Buildings of England, Norfolk 2: North-West and South*, (London, 1999), p. 282

⁵⁷⁶ Norfolk Heritage Explorer, <http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/record-details?TNF210>, accessed on 10.01.16

⁵⁷⁷ Fairweather, *Liber Eliensis*, p. 147

the Domesday link between Ely and Dereham and, as shall be seen below, the continued cult of St. Withburgha at Dereham it all but conclusively disproves the possibility of West Dereham as the place of St. Withburgha's monastic foundation. In summary it may then be tentatively postulated that Withburgha, while unlikely to have been a daughter of Anna, may very well have been a member of the wider royal East Anglian dynasty and founded a monastic community in or around what is now the town of Dereham in the first half of the eighth century. Her supposedly incorrupt body was removed in 974 by Abbot Byrthnoth to the re-founded monastery at Ely to "give it greater lustre by the adornment and splendour of her presence".⁵⁷⁸ Her translation to Ely marks a turning point in terms of textual evidence for her cult since the feast of her translation (8th of July) appears for the first time in the Bosworth Psalter (produced in the last quarter of the tenth century⁵⁷⁹) and makes a number of appearances in other pre-conquest liturgical calendars.⁵⁸⁰ Her cult does not seem to have gained a lasting recognition after the conquest (at least in monastic circles), since apart from the post-conquest Ely calendars, which continue to mark the feasts of her translation and deposition (17 March) her feast is only marked in one surviving calendar, that of Deeping Priory in Lincolnshire.⁵⁸¹

The *vita* of St. Withburgha is preserved in two recensions,⁵⁸² both originating from the monastic community at Ely.⁵⁸³ The *vita* now preserved at Corpus Christi College can be dated to the opening decades of the twelfth century, perhaps even as early as 1106⁵⁸⁴ and the Trinity College manuscript was, based on internal evidence, produced sometime between 1170 and 1189.⁵⁸⁵ It largely follows the earlier version of the *vita*, but widens the narrative scope to include Withburgha's childhood and early life. The re-working,

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 146

⁵⁷⁹ British Library, Addit. MS 37517,

<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=8710>, accessed on 10.01.16

⁵⁸⁰ Love, *Goscelin*, p. xxv-xxvi

⁵⁸¹ Wormald, F., ed., *English Benedictine Calendars After AD 1100*, (London, 1939), pp. lxxvii-lxxxi & p. 129

⁵⁸² Trinity College Cambridge, O. 2. 1., James, M. R., *The Western Manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge: A Descriptive Catalogue*, Volume III, (Cambridge, 1902), p. 82 & Corpus Christi College, MS 393, James, M. R., *Descriptive Catalogue of the Library of Corpus Christi College Cambridge*, Part IV, (Cambridge, 1911), p. 252

⁵⁸³ See Love, *Goscelin*, pp. xlvi-ci for details regarding the likelihood of Goscelin of Saint-Bertin's involvement in the writing of St. Withburgha's *vita* and evidence regarding the relationship between the two recensions of her life

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid, p. xciii

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid, p. lii

modification and expansion of hagiographical narratives is of course by no means unusual, but the reasons for the differences in the two lives of St. Withburgha may reveal something regarding the progress of her cult. The Corpus Christi manuscript gives virtually no information regarding the early life of Withburgha and begins the narrative proper with her arrival at Dereham. Her life is dealt with fairly quickly and the greater part of the narrative in this version concerns her translation to Ely and her second translation to the new church there in 1106. Her connections with Norfolk are largely ignored or downplayed as of course befits an account produced at her resting place in Ely. The Trinity manuscript account adds narratives regarding her early life in Holkham and the miracles worked by her in her childhood. It also contains the sections of the older *vita* concerning her life and work at Dereham, but ends abruptly without describing her removal to Ely and her second translation there. While it is easy to see why the monks of Ely wanted to negate any claims to St. Withburgha, either physically in the form of her relics or as a spiritual patroness, from the places connected with her in Norfolk it is less immediately obvious why half a century on the same monastic community should produce an account of her life that exclusively concerned itself with those aspects of her life relating to Norfolk. It is possible that the relative failure of Withburgha's cult to gain any serious traction may be answerable for this. Initially it seems that the over-riding concern for the Ely monks was the establishment of legitimacy in terms of their possession of the body of Withburgha and denial of any rival claims. If the cult however subsequently failed to thrive (perhaps because of questions regarding her sanctity or the legitimacy of the claim of her membership of the saintly kin of Anna and Etheldreda) it is conceivable that in an effort to boost her appeal these perceived shortcomings would have been addressed via a modification to her hagiographical narrative. Her miracle working in Holkham and Dereham is turned from a potentially negative detraction to her cult in Ely into an argument for her widespread influence and her claim as a patron not only of a single community, but the entire region as "the eastern star of the East Angles".⁵⁸⁶ For this strategy to be feasible, one must assume that her veneration in Holkham and Dereham still continued (or in the case of Holkham had begun) in the later twelfth century. In the case of Dereham evidence for the flourishing of a cult of St.

⁵⁸⁶ "Orientale orientalium Anglorum sidus...", Love, Goscelin, p. 54/55

Withburgha in the twelfth century may be found in the *Miracula S. Wihtburge*, a twelfth century text preserved in a single copy⁵⁸⁷ (internally dateable post 1145). This miracle collection is solely composed of narratives that had purportedly taken place in Dereham and the surrounding area and no mention is made anywhere of Ely. Love tentatively argues that this collection should be seen as a product of the school of hagiography evolving at Ely in this period and that the information, if it was based on anything other than the writer's imagination, must have come from Dereham pilgrims to Ely.⁵⁸⁸

The conspicuous absence of Ely and the abundance of place references around Dereham in the text does however raise another possibility. Given that Dereham was at this time still a possession of Ely, the presence of sufficiently literary clergy on hand at Dereham to produce a miracle collection of the local saint does not seem far-fetched. In either case the miracle narratives themselves certainly attest to a still very active cult of St.

Withburgha at Dereham in the second half of the twelfth century. Despite the seeming failure of her cult in Ely after the twelfth century devotion to Withburgha continued in Dereham. Blomefield records a chapel dedicated to St. Withburgha in one of the transepts of the church of St. Nicholas at Dereham until the dissolution.⁵⁸⁹ He also records a guild of St. Withburgha active in the second half of the fifteenth century.⁵⁹⁰ Such a guild, apart from its more conventional societal functions, is a good indicator of a still active cult, since the feasts of the patron or patroness would be commemorated annually by the guild members. The will of Thomas Spyk, dated 1474, left a bequest to the light of St. Withburgha in the church of St. Nicholas.⁵⁹¹ The church still houses a late fifteenth century rood screen image of St. Withburgha. Curiously however this image does not originate from St. Nicholas' church, but was installed there in 1949, after its rescue from the collapsed tower and nave of St. John's church in Oxborough. The village of Oxborough lies barely three miles east of West Dereham and the presence of St. Withburgha on the screen in its church may be indicative of the fact, that the above mentioned confusion regarding the place of St. Withburgha's foundation gave rise to a secondary focal point for

⁵⁸⁷ British Library, Cotton Caligula, A. viii

⁵⁸⁸ Love, *Goscelin*, p. xcix-c

⁵⁸⁹ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 10, p. 211

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 214

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid*

her cult there. The most obvious survival of her cult in Dereham is her well in the churchyard of St. Nicholas. The present structure housing the well is of the nineteenth century, but Blomefield records “a curious old *Gothic* arch, from which runs a spring of clear water, formerly said to have had many medicinal and healing qualities”⁵⁹² and makes mention of the ruins of a chapel which he contends once stood over the well. The first evidence for this spring comes from the *Corpus Christi* manuscript of her *vita* and describes her translation into the church fifty-five years after her burial and the emergence of a “spring of bright water”⁵⁹³ from the spot where her body had lain (this appears to be the exhumation recorded in the *ASC* for the year 798). Tantalisingly Blomefield additionally makes mention of a second well of St. Withburgha “some distance from the churchyard”,⁵⁹⁴ although no other trace of this second well could be found in the surviving evidence. All of the above in any case paints a reasonably coherent picture pointing towards a local cult of St. Withburgha in Dereham enduring well past the downturn her cult seemed to suffer at Ely in the twelfth century and maintaining a presence into the closing years of the fifteenth century. Direct evidence for pilgrims who went to Dereham to seek St. Withburgha’s intercession is lacking, but it can be assumed that the healing spring in the churchyard drew at least a modicum of interest from the environs of Dereham and small scale, local pilgrimages to her well and her chapel occurred throughout the Middle Ages.

2.8. Elsing

The church of St. Mary at Elsing was built in c. 1330 by Sir Hugh Hastings and is chiefly famous for the sumptuous memorial brass of its founder.⁵⁹⁵ Its connection to medieval pilgrimage is provided by a single mention of a medieval testator, the prolific Alice Cooke. Her bequest for a pilgrimage to Seynt Spyrite (Holy Spirit) is not accompanied by a location, but has been connected to Elsing church by another will, that of Margaret Alleyn

⁵⁹² *Ibid*, p. 216

⁵⁹³ *De loco autem illo quo prius sepulta fuerat fons aque emanat lucidissimus, pluribus eius nomine constans signum remedii*, Love, *Goscelin*, pp. 66-67

⁵⁹⁴ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 10, p. 217

⁵⁹⁵ Pevsner & Wilson, *Norfolk 2*, p. 331

of Elsing (1503), who left “1 li waxe, to be made of v small tapers”⁵⁹⁶ for “Seynte Sprytte”. Specific veneration of the third member of the Holy Trinity is relatively uncommon; church dedications more usually refer to the Holy Trinity in its entirety or specifically to St. Saviour (Christ). The Holy Spirit is of course well represented in medieval church art, generally displayed as a dove descending from above. Judging from the available evidence in the form of a further six wills from Elsing testators⁵⁹⁷ (spanning the period 1480-1518), none of which mention bequests to this image, it must be suspected that this was yet another shrine of limited local and indeed personal appeal. The exact nature of the image at Elsing is not known and the inference that the proxy pilgrimage of Alice Cooke was indeed intended to end at Elsing is by no means certain.

2.9. Foulsham

The standing elevation of the church of the Holy Innocents at Foulsham dates to the fourteenth (chancel) and fifteenth (nave, aisles and tower) centuries, although remnants of thirteenth century work can be discerned in the north arcade.⁵⁹⁸ Its connection to pilgrimage rests entirely on the assertion of Blomefield who notes that “here was also a famous image of St. Botolph, and I find a pilgrimage to it in 1506”.⁵⁹⁹ St. Botolph was the founder and first abbot of the monastery at Iken (Icanhoe, Suffolk) and is one of the principal conversion era saints of East Anglia. He was widely venerated in East Anglia (his relics were shared between Thorney, Ely, Bury St. Edmunds and later Westminster), with sixteen churches in the region dedicated to him.⁶⁰⁰ His repute and veneration may have declined in the later Middle Ages as he is notably absent from any surviving rood screens in East Anglia. As is the case with many such small scale local image shrines this isolated mention was oft repeated in subsequent writing on the subject of east Anglian

⁵⁹⁶ Harrod, *Extracts from Early Wills*, p. 122

⁵⁹⁷ Manning, C. R., ‘Elsing Church’, *Norfolk Archaeology* VI (1864), pp. 200-212, p. 211 & Harrod, ‘Extracts from Early Wills’, pp. 115-122

⁵⁹⁸ Pevsner & Wilson, *Norfolk* 1, p. 470 & Norfolk Heritage Explorer,

<http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/record-details?MNF3105-Holy-Innocents>, accessed on 19.02.16

⁵⁹⁹ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 8, p. 208

⁶⁰⁰ Linnell, *Church Dedications*, p. 18

pilgrimage⁶⁰¹ until its position as an established pilgrimage location passes from a historical possibility to certain fact. There is no reason to suppose that this image was any more or less popular than all the other parochial image shrines detailed in this gazetteer, but as with the majority of such locations, it can be fairly safely assumed that their 'fame' was intensely local and late medieval in origin.

2.10. Great Hautbois

The church of the Assumption of St. Mary at Great Hautbois is of eleventh century Anglo-Saxon origin, but was added to and altered in the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries,⁶⁰² before becoming disused and ruined in the middle of the nineteenth century. Blomefield writes that "in this church was a famous image of St. Theobald, commonly called St. Tebbald of Hobbies; [which] was much frequented for its many pretended miracles, so that pilgrimages used to be made to it".⁶⁰³ St. Theobald, like St. Wandred at Bixley, is in many ways a saint far away from his traditional centres of veneration. St. Theobald was an eleventh century saint born in the Champagne region of France, who lived the life of a hermit first in the Ardennes and later at Pettingen (Luxembourg) and Salanigo (Italy), where he died in 1066. His veneration accordingly was strongest in France, Italy, Luxembourg and Belgium.⁶⁰⁴ Apart from his shrine at Lakenham (see Lakenham) he is not represented in church dedications from either Norfolk or Suffolk (although an altar to this saint existed in Norwich Cathedral, see appendix 5) and is represented but once on a rood screen in the region (Hempstead, Norfolk). An 'aisle' of St. Theobald existed in the fifteenth century in the church of St. Mary in Newmarket.⁶⁰⁵ As with virtually every other local shrine discussed within this gazetteer the evidence for the assertion that this was a famous image with an established tradition of local or even

⁶⁰¹ See for example Taylor, *Index Monasticus*, p.: 66 and Quarles, T., *The History and Antiquities of Foulsham in Norfolk*, (London, 1842), pp. 37-8

⁶⁰² Norfolk Heritage Explorer, <http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/record-details?MNF7677-St-Theobald>, accessed on 23.02.16

⁶⁰³ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 6, p. 298

⁶⁰⁴ Catholic Encyclopedia, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14567b.htm>, accessed on 23.02.16

⁶⁰⁵ In 1488 John Gryggs left 3s 8d for the "reparacion of the Ile of seynt Tebold" in his will. May, P. & Ellis, D., *St. Mary's Church Newmarket, A Guide and History*, (Newmarket, 2015), p. 17

regional pilgrimage is very slight. In the case of St. Theobald's shrine at Hautbois the same testator (Agnes Parker, Krestwick, 1507) providing the only evidence for pilgrimage to St. Ethelbert's chapel in Cringleford also mentions a pilgrimage to "St. Tebald of Hobeis".⁶⁰⁶ Far from providing secure attestation of an established tradition it could more coherently be argued that one is dealing with a rather exceptional will by a far from average testator (see also the will of Alice Cooke). It is the repetition of the scant primary evidence in both antiquarian works and more recent discussions on the subject that seems to have embedded this shrine, like a good number of others (i.e. St. Petronilla at Long Stratton, St. Botolph at Foulsham or John the Baptist at Trimmingham) into the accepted pilgrimage itinerary of medieval East Anglia. In the case of St. Theobald there is some supplementary evidence to draw on, such as the bequest made in 1507 by Thomas Wood of Coltishall for the painting of the "new tabernacle" at St. Theobald's church,⁶⁰⁷ although this is a far more common bequest of a local testator for works to be carried out in his local parish church and is not necessarily indicative of any special veneration to this saint and his image. The fact that the church at Great Hautbois is in this will referred to as St. Theobald's rather than its original Marian dedication may however be indicative of a local veneration for that saint that must have been of some duration.

2.11. Great Yarmouth

Given Great Yarmouth's size and importance as one of the most important medieval harbours in the East of England and the principal conduit of trade going to and coming from Norwich, the evidence for pilgrimage to this town is surprisingly sparse. The best evidence that can be garnered comes from the church of St. Nicholas. The church is a foundation of Herbert Losinga and was the church of the Benedictine priory at Great Yarmouth, a cell of the Cathedral priory at Norwich. The original building was completed about the year 1119,⁶⁰⁸ but the church was altered and expanded during the thirteenth,

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid

⁶⁰⁸ Norfolk Heritage Explorer, <http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/record-details?MNF4329>, accessed on 04.04.16

fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The church was hit by a German bomb in 1942 and this damage, coupled with the subsequent fire destroyed the entire interior. It is claimed to be England's largest parish church. Henry Swinden lists the chapels extant in this church in the later Middle Ages (they may not have all been co-existent, but the majority of the evidence for their use is derived from wills evidence from the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries).⁶⁰⁹ The chapels dedicated to various saints listed by Swinden are as follows:

1. St. Mary de Arneburgh

2. St. Catherine

3. St. Christopher

4. St. Laurence

5. Holy Trinity

6. St. Toley (Olave)

7. Our Lady of Porey

8. St. Lewis (Louis)

9. St. Eligius (Eloi)

10. St. Thomas the Martyr

11. St. George

12. King Henry (VI)

13. St. Margaret

14. St. Edmund

⁶⁰⁹ Swinden, H., *The History and Antiquities of the ancient burgh of Great Yarmouth in the County of Norfolk*, (Norwich, 1772)

15. St. Pernel (Petronilla)

16. Jesus

17. St. Michael⁶¹⁰

Morant, writing in 1872 additionally presents evidence for a chapel dedicated to St. John the Baptist (built in 1484-5) and St. Clare.⁶¹¹ Such a profusion of chapels, altars and lights dedicated to various Saints is of course the rule rather than the exception in a late medieval English church, but the evidence from St. Nicholas does hint at an exceptionally dense concentration of these clearly delineated spaces for prayer, contemplation and the giving of offerings, attempting to accommodate a wide range of saints to suit every hue of devotional preference in the visiting faithful. The inclusion for example of St. Lewis (Louis IX, King of France) is a curious one; his popularity in France during the late Middle Ages is undeniable, but there is virtually no discernible cult of this saint in England.⁶¹² His presence here may be attributable to French influences owing to the trading contacts between Great Yarmouth, the Low Countries and France. The two Marian chapels are equally somewhat curious in their specific dedications. St. Mary de Arneburgh is plausibly identified by Morant as referring to Aardenburg (Netherlands, Zeeuws-Vlaanderen). The shrine of Our Lady of Aardenburg lay just a few miles from Sluys and was visited after the so named 'Battle of Sluys' (24 June 1340) by the victorious Edward III in an act of thanksgiving.⁶¹³ According to Manship the mariners of Great Yarmouth played a decisive role in this battle and in the siege of Calais six years later.⁶¹⁴ The assumption hitherto was that this dedication was given in commemoration of the victory and the subsequent pilgrimage of the king, which likely was attended by a good number of the fleet from Yarmouth.⁶¹⁵ It should also be noted that the statue of Our Lady of Aardenburg was

⁶¹⁰ Ibid, p. 807/8

⁶¹¹ Morant, A. W., 'Notices of the Church of St. Nicholas, Great Yarmouth', *Norfolk Archaeology* VII (1872), pp. 215-248

⁶¹² There are no pre-Reformation church dedications on record in England to St. Louis, see Arnold-Foster, F., *Studies in Church Dedications*, Volume III, (London, 1899), p. 18

⁶¹³ Ibid, p. 223

⁶¹⁴ Palmer, C. J., ed., *The History of Great Yarmouth by Henry Manship, Town Clerk, temp. Queen Elizabeth*, (Great Yarmouth, 1854), p. 100

⁶¹⁵ See Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 166 and Morant, 'Church of St. Nicholas', p. 223

associated with miracles concerning the calming of the sea⁶¹⁶ and would certainly make an excellent choice for this harbour location. The first listing of this chapel in the surviving obedientiary rolls from the priory however only occurs in 1484, nearly a century and a half after the battle at Sluys.⁶¹⁷ The fourteen surviving rolls preceding this date recorded either a 'chapel of the blessed Mary' or a 'chapel of the blessed Mary in the cemetery'.⁶¹⁸ Judging from the position these entries occupy within the accounts, the fact that only one or the other is mentioned, and the similar income figures derived from them it appears clear that this is in fact the same chapel given different designations. The chapel of 'Mary de Arnburgh' equally thereafter occupies the same position in the accounts and does not seem to be a separate space, but the latest incarnation of this same chapel. The first year it was recorded under this dedication income in offerings rose by over 96 per cent and remained similarly high until the early years of the sixteenth century, when it slipped back to previous levels (see figure 43). Whether this chapel was indeed named after the shrine in Aardenburg following Edward III's victory remains unclear, but appears less than likely given the delay in the use of this dedication for the chapel. A similar pilgrimage of thanksgiving, and in this case also of supplication, to the Aardenburg shrine, much closer to the time of the first appearance of this designation in the rolls, was carried out by Edward IV during his temporary exile from England in 1470.⁶¹⁹ This may equally well have led to the re-naming of the chapel. Given the above mentioned trade links and the regular commerce between the Low Countries and the east coast of England it is not necessary to ascribe such a specific event to the dedication.

⁶¹⁶ Swanson, R. N., *Religion and Devotion in Europe, c. 1215- c. 1515*, (Cambridge, 1995), p. 163

⁶¹⁷ NRO, DCN 2/4, 21 rolls

⁶¹⁸ Ibid, these are the rolls for the years 1355/6, 1386/7, 1400/1, 1404/5, 1412/3, 1441/2, 1442/3, 1444/5, 1445/6, 1446/7, 1450/1, 1452/3, 1469/70 and 1471/2

⁶¹⁹ Schnitker, H., 'Margaret of York on Pilgrimage: The Exercise of Devotion and the Religious Traditions of the House of York' in Biggs, D. L. & Michalove, S. D. & Compton Reeves, A., eds., *Reputation and Representation in fifteenth-century Europe*, (Leiden, 2004), p. 98

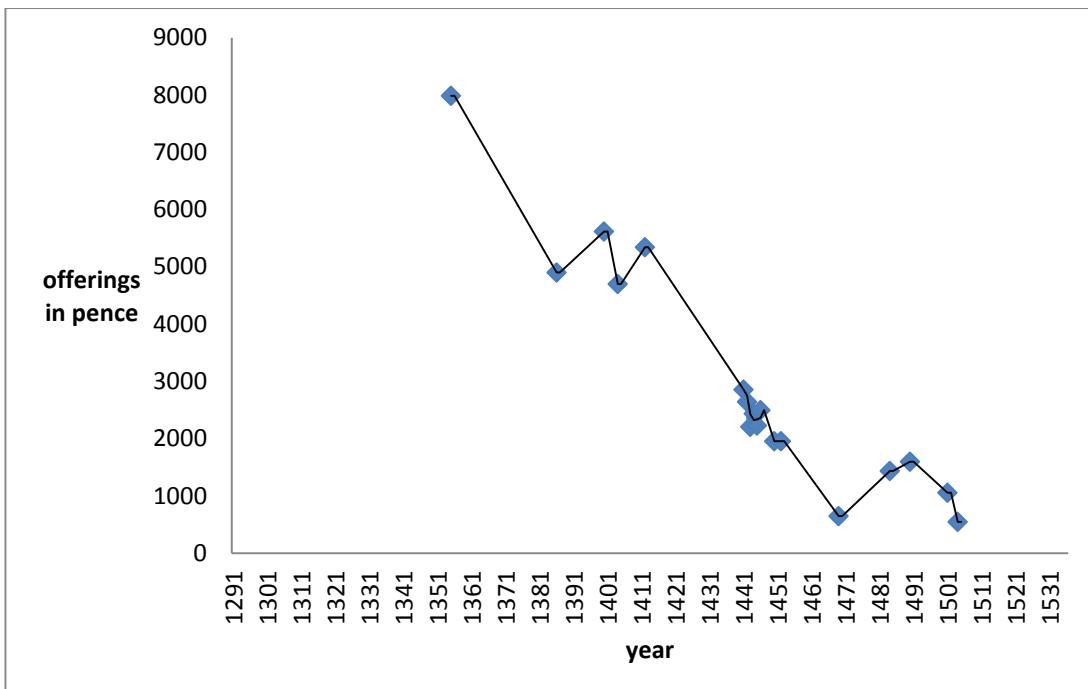


Figure 43: Income in offerings to the chapel of St. Mary, Great Yarmouth⁶²⁰

Regular economic, cultural and religious interchange had spread the fame of the Aardenburg shrine and the dedication in Great Yarmouth may simply be a reflection of this. Whatever the original impetus, it is clear from the evidence in the surviving rolls, that it captured the imagination and led to a temporary revival in the fortunes of St. Nicholas as a destination for pilgrimage. The Marian dedication of 'Our Lady of the Porey' (based on the evidence from the guilds extant in the town this is a corruption of 'Pere'⁶²¹) is less easy to pin down. It cannot with certainty be determined what 'Pere' may refer to. Waterton advances a number of theories of which the most likely seems to be that 'Our Lady of Porey' refers to 'Notre Dame du Perroy' a foundation of late eleventh/early twelfth century date of Robert Le Gros in Béthune⁶²² (Pas-de-Calais,). Waterton wrongly asserts that the town was sacked by the English in 1406 and implies that the dedication is, as may have been the case with 'St. Mary de Arneburgh', one of commemoration and dedication. This may well be the case, but the assault on Béthune took place prior to the Battle of Crécy in 1346 and was eventually beaten off by the defenders of the town.

⁶²⁰ Graph by author from data in NRO DCN 2/4/1-14, 16, 18-20

⁶²¹ "The Guild of St. Mary de le Pere", Swinden, *History of Great Yarmouth*, p. 811

⁶²² Waterton, E., *Pietas Mariana Britannica*, (London, 1879), pp. 541-2

Nevertheless, if one is to believe Manship, men from Yarmouth certainly fought in this campaign and etymologically it is no great leap from ‘Perroy’ to ‘Porey’. The remaining chapels are of a more usual and expected nature. It may however be mentioned that the inclusion of St. Edmund offers yet another hint at the nature of the faithful attending these chapels, since St. Edmund’s hagiographers (see Bury St. Edmunds) strongly emphasised those of his miracles concerning rescues at sea and arguably set him up as a saint in competition with St. Nicholas in terms of their guardianship of the waters of the East Anglian coast. Indeed four of the nineteen churches dedicated to St. Edmund across the entire region occur along the stretch of coastline to the north and south of Great Yarmouth (from north to south these are: Caister, Fritton, Kessingland and somewhat further afield Southwold⁶²³) with the churches of Burlingham, Acle⁶²⁴ and Thurne⁶²⁵ adding another three just a few miles inland from Great Yarmouth. This statistically striking cluster may well be indicative of the particular appeal Edmund held for seafarers and their families. In addition to the evidence gathered from bequests from wills the obedientiary rolls also record a number of trunks, boxes and images at which offerings could be made. The image and trunk of St. Nicholas is recorded in the rolls from 1355 to 1490. His income is often grouped together with unspecified ‘others’, and it is therefore impossible to determine the exact level of offerings there. The highest recorded income figures occur in the first two surviving rolls (1355 and 1386, see figure 44). Thereafter the decline in offerings, which can be seen in almost every obedientiary roll from East Anglia, continues throughout the fifteenth century. As discussed above the Marian shrine follows a slightly different trajectory thanks to its late fifteenth century revival. A number of the fifteenth-century rolls contain entries recording income received at the ‘relics’. These are presumably the relics mentioned by Blomefield⁶²⁶ which consist of “a relick of the oil of St. Nicholas, [a relic] of St. Margaret, [a relic] of St. George, in gold, [a relic] of the Holy Thorn, in silver [and a relic] of St. Maurick [Maurice], in copper”.⁶²⁷

⁶²³ Pinner, R., *The Cult of St. Edmund in medieval East Anglia*, (Woodbridge, 2015), p. xi

⁶²⁴ Ibid

⁶²⁵ Norfolk Heritage Explorer, <http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/record-details?MNF8553-St-Edmund%27s-Church-Thurne>, accessed on 20.03.16

⁶²⁶ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 11, p. 367

⁶²⁷ Ibid

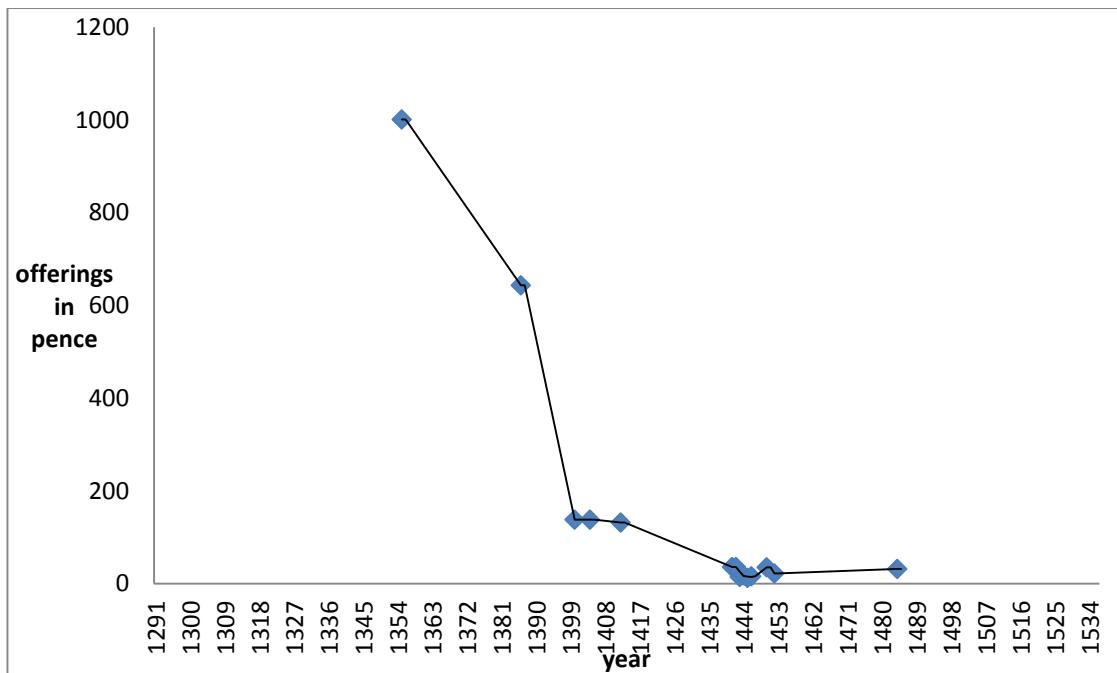


Figure 44: Offerings to the image of St. Nicholas, Great Yarmouth⁶²⁸

Income at the reliquaries was never very high and by the year 1445 had fallen to 17 d.⁶²⁹ In the rolls there can also be found one isolated mention of a box of the blessed Anne and in the last four in the series mention is made of shrine of Henry VI. Devotion to ‘good King Henry’ was not uncommon across East Anglia, but the shrine at Great Yarmouth appears to have aroused a good deal of initial interest with more than £15 being collected there at the year of its first mention (1484/5). His income is combined with that of “sanctus Wandregesilius”,⁶³⁰ but it can be assumed that the bulk of the offerings was due to Henry. As a whole the evidence from the obedientiary rolls paints a somewhat unusual picture for the progress of devotion and pilgrimage at St. Nicholas’ church. The decline in devotion and the resulting loss in income from offerings which can be witnessed across East Anglia in the fifteenth-century is present here, but the priory monks effected a significant and unprecedented revival with the institution of the shrine of Henry VI and the reinvention of the Marian chapel sometime in the 1480s. The roll for the year 1504/5

⁶²⁸ Graph by author from data in NRO DCN 2/4/1-13, 16

⁶²⁹ NRO, DCN 2/4/10

⁶³⁰ NRO, DCN 2/4/16

does hint at a downturn in the shrine's popularity, but it is not as complete as witnessed elsewhere in this period.

2.12. Holkham

Holkham claims a connection to the East Anglian Wuffing dynasty of the seventh century by way of one of King Anna's saintly progeny. One of the two recensions of the Life of St. Withburgha (Trinity College Cambridge O. 2. 1.), dateable to the latter decades of the twelfth century, relates her upbringing in a village "on her father's lands, called Holkham".⁶³¹ Following a very well-trodden hagiographical narrative arc the text goes on to describe her piety, attention to religious study and her becoming nature. A miracle worked in her childhood describes the origins of the church of St. Withburgha at Holkham. Withburgha was in the habit of collecting pebbles from the sea-shore and heaping them up, whereupon they would multiply and be miraculously transformed into a solid mass of stone and transported away from the shore. The present church of St. Withburgha stands on a striking natural mound, traditionally believed to have been an Anglo-Saxon or Iron Age site, which undoubtedly gave rise to the above miracle story. The church was extensively remodelled both in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. In the course of these later building phases, the foundation of an Anglo-Saxon or early Norman tower and a mass of Norman stonework were uncovered,⁶³² giving a *terminus ad quem* for the existence of a church on the present site. The dedication to St. Withburgha was seemingly already long established in the twelfth century, since the Trinity College manuscript reports that "a church was built there in her memory",⁶³³ further corroborating the architectural evidence. It goes on to assert that the church at "Withburgestowe"⁶³⁴ was constructed during the reign of King Aethelwald (supposedly Withburgha's uncle). This neat chronology must, however, surely be seen as yet another buttress in the narrative foundation laid by the Ely monks to tie together the remains of

⁶³¹ *Et quidem iuxta mare cum sua nutrita in quodam uico paterni iuris nutrienda tradebatur Ulcham uocitato*, Love, *Goscelin*, pp. 86-7

⁶³² Pevsner & Wilson, *Norfolk* 2, p. 412

⁶³³ Love, *Goscelin*, p. 91

⁶³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 90

the saints housed in their church into one cohesive kin group (see Ely and Dereham). Aethelwald succeeded Aethelhere (a brother of both Anna and Aethelwald) only around a year after the death of King Anna and Withburgha's supposed flight from Holkham to Dereham. He died in 663 or 664.⁶³⁵ The construction of a church 'in memory' of Withburgha would therefore pre-suppose that her death and the beginnings of her cult occurred before 664 at the very latest. Even allowing for the possibility that Withburgha was indeed a daughter of Anna and not a member of his dynasty one or two generations further down the line (see Dereham for a discussion on possible dates for the life of Withburgha), this does not seem very likely. It seems more prudent to assume that Aethelwald was posthumously pressed into service by the Ely monk who authored the Trinity College manuscript to serve as testimony for Withburgha's cult and provide further evidence for her dynastic pedigree. This does not however negate the possibility of a genuine connection between Withburgha and Holkham. The preservation of the place name of Withburgestowe in the Trinity College manuscript certainly points to a pre-conquest Anglo-Saxon foundation and the unique nature of this dedication (Holkham church is the only known dedication to this saint) supports the argument that the connection is one of great antiquity and is likely to preserve a link to the shadowy figure of St. Withburgha. The only tenuous evidence for a pilgrimage to St. Withburgha at this site also comes from the Trinity College *vita* of Withburgha. The author, in referring to the miracle of the stones still visible at her church in Holkham, wrote of "the many who come to see it".⁶³⁶ The abbey of West Dereham, which possibly entertained a rival claim to that of Dereham as the place of St. Withburgha's monastic foundation (see Dereham) and may therefore have been keen to foster a link with Holkham, was granted a moiety of this church as early as the year 1199, although this seems to have been appropriated by the bishop of Norwich very shortly afterwards.⁶³⁷ The titles and rights for this church did eventually come into the possession of West Dereham in the middle of the fourteenth century.⁶³⁸ If this acquisition was indeed connected to West Dereham abbey's investment in the cult of Withburgha rather than a mere matter of property portfolio diversification,

⁶³⁵ Cannon, J. & Hargreaves, A., *The Kings and Queens of Britain*, (Oxford, 2009), p. 30

⁶³⁶ Love, *Goscelin*, pp. 90-1

⁶³⁷ Hardy, D. T., ed., *Rotuli chartarum in turri Londinensi asservati*, Volume I, Part I, (London, 1837), p. 21

⁶³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 244

it points towards a sustained, if most likely localized, devotion towards her at West Dereham and by extension Holkham throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Combined with the evidence from Dereham, this gives a picture of Withburgha's cult that seems to suggest three separate focal points for her veneration in Norfolk (in addition to her cult at Ely), with Dereham and Holkham presenting possibilities of uninterrupted activity spanning from the middle Anglo-Saxon period until the dissolution.

2.13. Hoveton

Francis Blomefield mentions the veneration of a local saint in his essay on Hoveton: "In this parish, in a wood, called Little Wood, one Margaret was killed in 1170; she was buried in St. Benet's Abbey, and esteemed a saint".⁶³⁹ His information was presumably derived from William Worcester's *Itineraries*.⁶⁴⁰ Luxford has identified a second reference to Margaret in the margin of BL Cotton MS Vitellius D. ix, f. 10v.⁶⁴¹ It seems likely that she was initially buried in Hoveton, but was translated to St. Benet's Abbey at some point after 1186, when the revenues and the living of the two churches at Hoveton fell under the jurisdiction of St. Benet's.⁶⁴² Hoggett suggests that the high number of church dedications to St. Margaret may in part be a result of this indigenous saint's cult at St. Benet's, but the evidence from surviving rood screen depictions, which without exception only depict St. Margaret of Antioch do not bear this out.⁶⁴³ Luxford's assertion that the cult was enthusiastically promoted by the monks of St. Benet's to enhance their status, attract lay patronage and remedy their dire financial situation⁶⁴⁴ appears well founded in the light of their continued efforts to support it at least until the last quarter of the

⁶³⁹ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 11, p. 42

⁶⁴⁰ *Beata Margareta martir occisa in Lytillwood in villula de Hofton Sancti Johannis anno Christi 1170 tempore regis* [blank in MS] *undecimo kalend. Junij in fine mensis Maij iacet sepulta sub altare principali inter reliquias ecclesie dicti monasterij*, Harvey, J. H., ed., *William Worcester: Itineraries*, (Oxford, 1969), p. 228

⁶⁴¹ *Domina beata margareta ancilla Christi et virgo que pro Christi nomine apud lytylwod passa et iugulata anno Christi a passionem*. M. C. Ixxx, Luxford, J. M., 'Saint Margaret of Holm: New Evidence concerning a Norfolk Benedictine Cult', *Norfolk Archaeology* XLIV (2002), pp. 111-19, p. 113

⁶⁴² Page, *History of Norfolk: Volume 2*, p. 331

⁶⁴³ Hoggett, R., 'St. Benet's Abbey, Horning, Norfolk', in University of York, *English Cathedrals and Monasteries through the Centuries*, CD-ROM, (York, 2013), PDF, p. 7

⁶⁴⁴ Luxford, *Saint Margaret of Holm*, pp. 114-5

fifteenth century. Their success appears to have been limited at best. No evidence has come to light that Margaret ever achieved anything other than limited local appeal. Alice Cooke from the neighbouring parish of Horstead left a bequest for somebody to visit St. Margaret at Horstead, but whether this refers to Margaret of the Little Wood or to an image of St. Margaret of Antioch is uncertain. The cult of St. Margaret of Antioch seems to have been particularly popular in medieval East Anglia with 58 churches dedicated to her in Norfolk alone⁶⁴⁵ and it is very possible that an image of St. Margaret or a chapel dedicated to her existed in Horstead church. No other evidence for a pilgrimage to her or any particular veneration in Hoveton survives. Her cult, if it ever gained any popular appeal there, seems to have declined by the time evidence from wills becomes available in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It is equally possible that a certain conflation with the universal cult of St. Margaret of Antioch occurred in the locality so long after the incident at Little Wood and that the veneration evident from Alice Cooke's will of St. Margaret in Horstead preserves the memory of the local girl within it. Margaret of Holm is, however, not the only indigenous saint in this parish. William Worcestre also mentions 'St. Wolfeius', the first hermit of this monastery⁶⁴⁶ and the fourteenth-century chronicle of John Brompton records an even earlier inhabitant; the hermit Suneman, who arrived in Holm in the early ninth century and was, much like St. Edmund, martyred during the ravages of the *micel here* about 870.⁶⁴⁷ No evidence has been uncovered to suggest that either of those shadowy figures was the subject of a cult and it is indeed questionable to what extent Suneman and Wolfeius, and also Margaret, are hagiographical inventions by the monks of St. Benet's in a bid to establish their abbey as a focal point for pilgrimage.

2.14. King's Lynn

The most notable location for pilgrims in King's Lynn was the Lady chapel, better known because of its distinctive red brick appearance and lofty position as the Red Mount

⁶⁴⁵ Linnell, *Church Dedications*, pp. 11-12

⁶⁴⁶ *Sanctus Wolfeius primus heremita huius cenobij .9. die Decembris*, Harvey, *Itineraries*, p. 232

⁶⁴⁷ For a detailed account of all references to Suneman and Wolfeius (i.e. Wulfric) see, Licence, T., 'Suneman and Wulfric: Two forgotten Saints of St. Benedict's Abbey at Holme in Norfolk', *Analecta Bollandiana* 122 (2004), pp. 361-72

chapel. Pevsner called it “one of the strangest Gothic churches in England” (see figure 46).⁶⁴⁸ It is built in the shape of an octagon with a recessed cruciform top storey. The Reverend Edward Edwards, in the first detailed antiquarian account of the building (and seemingly following Blomefield’s earlier abbreviated account of it) alludes to a chapel on this site from the fourteenth century onwards.⁶⁴⁹ Beloe’s history of the chapel contains a transcript of the licence granted by the Mayor of Lynn for the erection of the chapel, dated to 1485, which provides a very specific *terminus a quo*.⁶⁵⁰ The licence does however state, that the location for the new chapel was known as ‘Ladye Hylle’ suggesting an earlier collection with Marian worship at this location. The interior stonework of the top storey abounds with Marian graffiti, such as the interlinked VV (*virgo virginum*, see figure 47) and other designs possibly portraying the Holy House at Walsingham. A number of the rolls of the priory of St. Margaret, a cell of Norwich Cathedral Priory, founded by Herbert Losinga, survive recording offerings to this Lady chapel. The first such record can be found in the roll for 1485 (see figure 45), suggesting that the licence for the erection of the chapel may have been granted retrospectively, since the work could not have been completed in so short a time.

All authors who have written on the subject of this chapel conclude that it served as a wayside chapel for pilgrims on their way to Walsingham, and given King’s Lynn’s importance as a port and its location on the southernmost tip of the Wash (giving overland travellers from the north the first opportunity to turn east towards Walsingham) this function is not seriously in doubt. What may be a matter for debate though is the chapel’s popularity as a pilgrimage destination in its own right. Its highly distinctive appearance and late arrival on the scene in terms of pilgrimage in this region may well have made it an attractive location for pilgrims independent of the gravitational pull of Walsingham.

⁶⁴⁸ Pevsner & Wilson, *Norfolk 2*, p. 472

⁶⁴⁹ Edwards, E., *Some account of the chapel of Our Lady on the Mount, or Red Mount, at Lynn, Norfolk*, (London, 1812), pp. 61-6

⁶⁵⁰ “It is agreed by alle the hous that Robert Curraunce shall have licence to bilde a chapel upon the mount called the Ladye Hylle wt such grounde as shall be lefull nothing noyng the Comons of ther necesaries and on the condicion that the said Robert shall fynde suerte on to the Toun as the councell M. Fyncham and Herny Spylman will advyse” (dated, 25th of January, 1485), Beloe, E. M., *The Red Mount, King’s Lynn, being the Chapels on Our Lady’s Hill*, (King’s Lynn, 1897), pp. 9-10

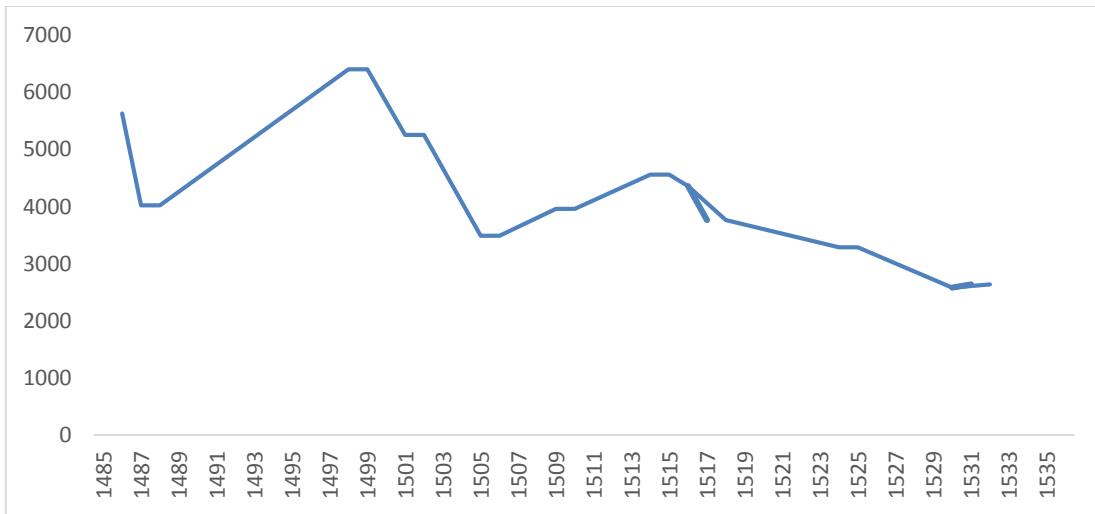


Figure 45: Offerings received at the chapel of Our Lady on the Mount, King's Lynn
(amount given in pence)⁶⁵¹



Figure 46: Red Mount Chapel, King's Lynn⁶⁵²

⁶⁵¹ Graph by author, data from Norfolk Record Office DCN 2/1/70, 72, 77, 78, 81, 84-90

⁶⁵² Author photograph

Whatever the primary focus of visiting pilgrims, the chapel certainly became an instant success. The roll for 1485/6 records 23l 9s 5 1/2 d given in offerings there, a level of oblations only exceeded at this time by those given to the shrine of St. Etheldreda amongst all the East Anglian shrines for which financial records survive.



Figure 47: Marian graffiti, interior south wall, Red Mount chapel. The top storey interior stone work contains dozens of examples of this design. Although likely of medieval origin, the VV use of this symbol as an apotropaic mark continued into the eighteenth century⁶⁵³

The level of offerings tailed off to a certain extent during the first three decades of the sixteenth century, but does not suffer the almost total collapse of devotion seen elsewhere (see for example appendix 5, combined offerings at Norwich cathedral). This could either be read in terms of the establishment of a new focal point for pilgrimage, which bucks the prevailing trend of diminishing engagement of the population with shrines and pilgrimages or as further corroboration of the exceptional lure of Walsingham as the most popular shrine in late medieval England. The absence of other such Marian shrines with a comparable level of success elsewhere in East Anglia suggests that the location of the Lady chapel in King's Lynn on the pilgrim route to Walsingham from the north (or indeed from overseas) must be seen as the primary reason for its popularity and that its continued appeal is as one with the immense popularity of the shrine at Walsingham. It must also be noted that besides the chapel on the Red Mount a number of

⁶⁵³ Author photograph

other chapels are also listed in the obedientiary accounts surviving from the priory. The chapels of SS Nicholas, James, Catherine and Mary (ad pontem) as well as the church of St. Margaret all receive varying levels of oblations. Visiting pilgrims could traverse the town in a great loop and visit all these focal points for pilgrimage in the space of no more than an hour. King's Lynn, like virtually all medieval towns was not restricted to a single church or chapel and it may therefore be more appropriate to view the various locations as part of a devotional townscape rather than single shrines.

2.15. Lakenham

The standing elevation of the church, although of thirteenth-century origin, largely dates to the fifteenth century. In about 1205 the rectory was appropriated to the chamberlain at Norwich cathedral priory. Blomefield notes that there was "also an image of St. Theobald, or Tebald, much frequented by pilgrims".⁶⁵⁴ It is also included in Taylor's fairly arbitrary index of pilgrimage sites in Norfolk.⁶⁵⁵ Apart from references to offerings income, which was never very substantial, in the chamberlain's accounts during the fifteenth century⁶⁵⁶ no evidence for the popularity of this shrine has as yet been uncovered. In all likelihood this can be accounted another of the large number of late medieval image shrines of restricted local appeal.

2.16. Long Stratton

Long Stratton is yet another site only connected to medieval pilgrimage by an isolated bequest for pilgrimage in a medieval will; the will in question being the much cited testament of Alice Cooke to whose enthusiasm for pilgrimage we owe knowledge of three pilgrimage destinations in Norfolk otherwise unrepresented in the primary source evidence. Alice left a bequest for a pilgrimage to be carried out on her behalf to "St.

⁶⁵⁴ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 4, p. 522

⁶⁵⁵ Taylor, R., *Index Monasticus*, (London, 1821), p. 66

⁶⁵⁶ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 4, p. 522

Parnell of Stratton".⁶⁵⁷ Parnell is the anglicised feminine diminutive form of Peter and refers to St. Petronilla. St. Petronilla was, according to the sixth century apocryphal *acta* of St. Nereus and St. Achilleus,⁶⁵⁸ the daughter of St. Peter mentioned in his second century *acta* and was venerated at Rome from at least the fourth century.⁶⁵⁹ Devotion to her cult in East Anglia is attested from five surviving rood screens bearing her image (North Elmham, Litcham, Smallburgh, Trimingham and Wolferton, all in Norfolk, although the identification of the female saints depicted on the Litcham, Smallburgh and Trimingham screens is not secure⁶⁶⁰). Long Stratton had two churches during most of the post-conquest medieval period, St. Michael and St. Peter, with St. Peter seemingly being the older of the two.⁶⁶¹ St. Peter's was consolidated to the church of St. Michael in 1449, but nevertheless continued to function as a second parish church (and apparently later as a chapel) until its destruction at the Dissolution.⁶⁶² Given the obvious association between St. Peter and St. Petronilla it seems therefore likely that the image to which Alice Cooke pledged her proxy pilgrimage was housed in St. Peter's church.

2.17. Martham

The standing elevation of Martham church, with the exception of the nineteenth century chancel, is largely of the fourteenth and fifteenth century. Blomefield notes that the church housed a chapel of St. Blithe (Blyth, Blida).⁶⁶³ His evidence dates to the years 1479 and 1522.⁶⁶⁴ The assertion that St. Blyth was buried at Martham in the late eleventh century⁶⁶⁵ cannot be verified by existing evidence. St. Blythe is commonly identified as the

⁶⁵⁷ "Item, I will have a man to go these pilgrimages: tou our Lady at Refam, to Seynt Spyrite; to St. Parnell of Stratton; to St. Leonard without Norwich; to St. Wандред of Byskeley; to St. Margaret of Horstead; to our Lady of Pity of Horstead; to St. John's Head at Trimmingham and the Holy Rood at Crostewyte", see Hart, 'Shrines and Pilgrimages of the County of Norfolk', p. 277

⁶⁵⁸ Catholic Encyclopedia, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11781b.htm>, accessed on 02.02.16

⁶⁵⁹ Wilpert, J., *Die Malereien der Katakomben Roms*, (Freiburg, 1903), plate 213

⁶⁶⁰ Baker, *English Panel Paintings*, p. 237

⁶⁶¹ Pevsner & Wilson, *Norfolk 2*, p.: 676 & Norfolk Heritage Explorer,

<http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/record-details?MNF10180-Site-of-St-Peter>, accessed on 02.02.16

⁶⁶² Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 5, pp. 197-8

⁶⁶³ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 11, p. 173

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid

⁶⁶⁵ Farmer, D., *Dictionary of Saints*, p. 63

mother of St. Walstan (referred to as Blida in the Latin life of this saint and as Blythe in the English verse life of St. Walstan).⁶⁶⁶ Apart from the chapel dedicated to her in Martham, Blythe is known, according to M. R. James, from a screen panel at St. James' church, Norwich, a fragment of medieval church glass from Cawston, and the north-east chancel window of the church of St. Mary at North Tuddenham.⁶⁶⁷ On closer inspection two of James' identifications of these depictions seems far from secure or can no longer be verified. The two northern as well as the eastern chancel windows at North Tuddenham are comprised entirely of nineteenth century glass and the only unidentified saintly figure that might correspond to St. Blythe can be found in the westernmost of the two south chancel windows. This window contains remnants of fifteenth century stained glass purchased from a builder's yard in East Dereham in the late nineteenth century and re-used during the restoration of North Tuddenham church.⁶⁶⁸ The origin of the glass is unknown. The female saint is depicted crowned and carries as her emblems a book and a crosier, suggesting an abbess. There are several other examples of this particular iconography being used to depict St. Etheldreda (i.e. Burlingham St. Andrew, Norfolk and Westhall, Suffolk⁶⁶⁹) and the identification of this saint as Blythe seems unlikely. The fragments of fifteenth century glass formerly preserved at Cawston rectory and containing, according to James a bit of glass depicting Blythe and "lettered St. Blida",⁶⁷⁰ have seemingly since been re-used to form a window at Cawston church, but both the image, as well as the inscription do not appear to have survived. The only secure depiction comes from the screen formerly housed at St. James, Pockthorpe, where the figure of a female saint is inscribed as *Sca blida*. Another oblique shred of evidence pointing to a cult of St. Blythe at Martham can be derived from the English verse life of St. Walstan. The Life contains eleven miraculous cures of pilgrims to St. Walstan's shrine, of which nine came from villages close to Bawburgh. The only exceptions are a pilgrim from Canterbury (who is however advised by a Bawburgh native to visit the shrine of St. Walstan) and a man from "Flegge".⁶⁷¹ Flegge is the name of the Hundred containing the

⁶⁶⁶ James, M. R., *Lives of St. Walstan*, pp. 244-251

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 239

⁶⁶⁸ [http://www.norfolkstainedglass.co.uk/North Tuddenham/home.shtml](http://www.norfolkstainedglass.co.uk/North%20Tuddenham/home.shtml), accessed on 10.01.16

⁶⁶⁹ Drake, M. & Drake, W., *Saints and their Emblems*, (London, 1916), p. 42

⁶⁷⁰ James, 'Lives of Walstan', p. 239

⁶⁷¹ Ibid, p. 265

parish of Martham and it is possible that his decision to venture across the county to visit St. Walstan may have been inspired by the veneration of Walstan's mother in his immediate environment. This is of course a link of the most tenuous kind and is included here to illustrate the possible connections between kin groups of saints and the opportunities this may have offered to spread a locally restricted cult via familial ties (as was the case with supposed offspring of King Anna). However, one interprets the sparse available evidence it seems certain that St. Blythe's cult was locally restricted and never gained any significant popularity even within its immediate surroundings.

2.18. Norwich, St. Stephen

The standing elevation of the church of St. Stephen's contain elements of mid-fourteenth century date, but the majority of the building as it survives today dates to the sixteenth century. The church is of interest as a relatively short-lived pilgrimage destination of the late medieval uncanonised Norfolk saint, Richard Caister. Caister was most likely born in the village of Caister St. Edmund near Norwich, and served as the vicar of Sedgeford from 1397 to 1402.⁶⁷² From that year until his death in 1420 he was vicar of St. Stephen's. Successive authors have attributed Wycliffite tendencies to his preachings,⁶⁷³ based chiefly on the unorthodox nature of his will, which unusually for the period, does not specify any masses, prayers or similar to be said for his soul, but instead left the entirety of his estate to be distributed to the poor (with the exception of £10 which were left for his parishioners to purchase antiphoners for their church). He makes a number of appearances in the book of Margery Kempe. In about the year 1413, Margery Kempe visited Richard Caister at his church. She relayed to him a vision she had received in which God had tasked her to tell Caister that he was "a high, chosen soul of mine, and tell him he greatly pleases me with his preaching".⁶⁷⁴ From this episode it must be inferred that

⁶⁷² <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4349>, accessed on 14.03.16

⁶⁷³ See Wilson, J., 'Communities of Dissent: The Secular and Ecclesiastical Communities of Margery Kempe's Book' in Watt, D., ed., *Medieval women in their communities*, (Toronto, 1997), pp. 155-85, p. 166, McMurray Gibson, G., *The Theatre of Devotion, East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages*, (Chicago, 1989), p. 31 and Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 4, Part II, p. 147

⁶⁷⁴ Windeatt, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, p. 74

Caister enjoyed considerable fame during his tenure as vicar of St. Stephen's and may have occupied a similar spiritual position as Julian of Norwich at this time, as a spiritual advisor and counsellor. After Richard Caister's death in 1420 Margery Kempe returned to St. Stephen's to undertake a pilgrimage of thanksgiving to his grave.⁶⁷⁵ The implication in the book of Margery Kempe is that God had worked a miracle of healing through Richard Caister, thereby establishing his saintly credentials possibly within weeks or months of his death. The tomb seems to have continued as a focal point for pilgrimage throughout the fifteenth century.⁶⁷⁶ The will of John Falbek of Thorndon in Suffolk suggests that Caister's grave had by the mid-fifteenth century achieved regional importance as a pilgrim location, and the will of Thomas Colpepper from Kent hints at a popularity that stretched beyond East Anglia.⁶⁷⁷ This is further corroborated by the survival of several types of pilgrim badges depicting him. Identification and association of pilgrim badges with individual shrines is sometimes extremely difficult, owing to their often generic nature (see Pilgrim Souvenirs). In the case of the badges associated with the tomb of Richard Caister, no such ambiguities exist. The badge designs are distinctive, showing Caister preaching from a pulpit (see figure 48), with one type shaped in a letter R and inscribed "kast".⁶⁷⁸ Badges originating at St. Stephen's have been found in Suffolk, London, Canterbury and Salisbury⁶⁷⁹ suggesting a shrine not only of regional, but of national standing. Manufacture and sale of such souvenirs required a minimum level of popularity to make it worthwhile, and the existence of not one, but a number of badge types suggests that Caister's tomb was indeed a popular destination throughout the fifteenth century. This type of cult of an uncanonised priest-saint is not exceptional in later medieval England and Richard Caister seemed merely to be the latest of these popularly

⁶⁷⁵ "Then she was stirred to go to St. Stephen's Church, were the good Vicar is buried who died only shortly before that time, and for whom God showed high mercy to his people...And her devotion was all the more increased, in that she saw our Lord work such special grace for such a creature as she had been conversant with in his lifetime", Windeatt, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, p. 186

⁶⁷⁶ The pilgrimage is known from fifteenth century wills, such as the will of John Falbek of Thorndon in Suffolk (1458), who left money for a pilgrim to visit Richard Caister's shrine, see Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 4, Part II, p. 183

⁶⁷⁷ Tanner, N. P., *The Church in late Medieval Norwich, 1370-1532*, (Toronto, 1984), p. 231

⁶⁷⁸ <http://collections.museumoflondon.org.uk/online/object/28939>, accessed on 14.03.16

⁶⁷⁹ Portable Antiquities Scheme, <https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/447740>, accessed on 14.03.16

acclaimed figures.⁶⁸⁰ Similar, earlier cults of this type can be found in Buckinghamshire (John Shorne⁶⁸¹), in the East Riding of Yorkshire (Philip Ingberd⁶⁸²) and in Cornwall (Richard Bovyle⁶⁸³). Along with much other evidence this proliferation of popularly acclaimed, uncanonised saints can be taken as a consequence of the increasing alienation of the laity with monastic institutions and the long established shrines of saints under their control.



Figure 48: Cast lead pilgrim badge of Richard Caister, dating to c. 1420-60 found in Suffolk⁶⁸⁴

⁶⁸⁰ Canonized priests, by contrast, were a rarity and only one such saint, St. Yves (canonized 1330), was created between the late twelfth and the mid-fifteenth centuries. See Vauchez, *Sainthood*, p. 260

⁶⁸¹ Shorne was rector of North Marston in Buckinghamshire and died in c. 1315. His cult endured until the reformation and was the most successful cult of this type, with seemingly multiple locations for his veneration, see <http://www.binhampriory.org/>, accessed on 14.03.16 for his veneration at Binham Priory in Norfolk. See also Page, W., ed., *A History of the County of Buckinghamshire*, Volume 4, (London, 1927), pp. 76-80.

⁶⁸² Philip Ingberd (d. 1325) was the absentee rector of Keyingham in the East Riding and his tomb, in the manner of that of St. Nicholas, began to extrude oil, Webb, D., *Pilgrimage in Medieval England*, (London, 2000), p. 153

⁶⁸³ Richard Bovyle was rector of Whitstone, Cornwall and died in 1359. The manner of his death was violent, but confusion seems to have persisted whether he was killed or died a suicide. Despite his highly irregular demise pilgrims began to visit his grave, and for a span of two years miracles were reported, Orme, N., *The Saints of Cornwall*, (Oxford, 2000), p. 71

⁶⁸⁴ Portable Antiquities Scheme, <https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/447740>, accessed on 14.03.16

2.19. Reepham

The church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Reepham is unusual for its position in a single churchyard with two other churches, which respectively served the adjoining parishes of Whitwell and Hackford. The earliest surviving parts of the standing elevation can be dated to around 1200.⁶⁸⁵ The will of Alice Cooke mentions a pilgrimage to be carried out on her behalf to Our Lady of Reepham. As is so often the case in the investigation of local image shrines located in parish churches no other evidence for the shrine's existence and possible importance can be found. It can reasonably be assumed that the shrine of Our Lady of Reepham was one of the many local parish church image shrines dedicated to her veneration (such as would have been found in most parish churches) and that its fame and popularity was of a very restricted local nature. The popular narrative of this shrine in the very recent past is however worth pointing out as it highlights the problem of the repetition of received facts and interpretations in the treatment of this subject in both the antiquarian literature and more recent works.

Blomefield asserts that in "this church was a famous image of the Virgin Mary";⁶⁸⁶ this in itself is of course quite a leap from a single mention in a medieval will, but out of such humble beginnings have grown statements such as these: "In medieval times, Reepham Church was an important place of pilgrimage. Although it was less famous than the shrine at Walsingham, people came on pilgrimage to Reepham to visit the image of Our Lady of Reepham, which had many miracles attributed to it".⁶⁸⁷ Admittedly none of the below cited references are academic works and merely seek to provide basic information on this aspect of the shrine's history, yet this process can be seen repeated in many pilgrim sites detailed in this gazetteer and has undoubtedly led to the likely inflation of these *loci*'s actual importance and popularity.

⁶⁸⁵ Norfolk Heritage Explorer, <http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/record-details?MNF7469-St-Mary%27s-Church-Reepham>, accessed on 07.03.16

⁶⁸⁶ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 8, p. 248

⁶⁸⁷ Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reepham,_Norfolk, accessed on 07.03.16, Similar statements can be found on a number of websites detailing this aspect of Reepham's history, all expressing similar sentiments in much the same way. See for example "Our Lady of Reepham", <http://ourladyofreepham.yolasite.com/>, accessed on 07.03.16 and World Public Library, <http://www.worldlibrary.org/article/whebn0004999341/reepham,%20norfolk>, accessed on 07.03.16

2.20. Thetford

The Cluniac priory of St. Mary was founded in 1104 by Roger Bigod in lieu of a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.⁶⁸⁸ It was established in a redundant church dedicated to St. Mary in Thetford, before being moved to its later location on the northern bank of the Little Ouse River in 1107. Throughout the first half of the twelfth century a steady stream of grants of land, advowsons, fisheries, tithes and other gifts⁶⁸⁹ enabled the priory monks to embark upon and finish a building program comprising an imposing Romanesque church and most of the necessary conventional buildings.⁶⁹⁰ The priory endured for the remainder of the medieval period, being classed as one of the 'greater' houses escaped the initial cull of small foundations in 1536, before finally surrendering to the king's commissioners in 1540.⁶⁹¹ Although not as well known as Walsingham or Bury St. Edmunds, Thetford is nevertheless almost invariably mentioned in connection to medieval pilgrimage in East Anglia.⁶⁹² Despite this the primary source evidence available is rather sparse. The principal document is the account of the erection of the Lady Chapel in the thirteenth century and the miracles occurring there before and after its completion⁶⁹³ by the priory monk John Brame. The account itself, although detailing events of the mid-thirteenth century and adding some early twelfth century material, dates from the early fifteenth century.⁶⁹⁴ John Brame relates how an ancient image of the Blessed Virgin was moved to the priory church before being removed, replaced with a new image and forgotten in an obscure part of the church. A poor workman of Thetford thereafter received repeated visions of St. Mary commanding him to relate to the prior that she desired a new chapel to be built on the north side of the church. The prior resolved to construct a timber chapel in honour of the Blessed Virgin. By means of various visions and signs (somewhat reminiscent of the account of the building of the replica of the Holy House of the Annunciation at Walsingham) the exact spot where the chapel was to be built was revealed, as well as the

⁶⁸⁸ Dymond, D., ed., *The Register of Thetford Priory, Part 1: 1482-1517*, (Oxford, 1995), p. 1

⁶⁸⁹ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 2, pp. 108-9

⁶⁹⁰ Dymond, *Thetford Priory*, p. 1

⁶⁹¹ Page, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 2, pp. 366-369

⁶⁹² See for example Morrison, S. S., *Women Pilgrims in Late Medieval England*, (London, 2000), p.: 18 & Bernard, G. W., *The Late Medieval English Church: Vitality and Vulnerability before the Break with Rome*, (Padstow, 2012), p. 127

⁶⁹³ Parker Library, CCCC MS 329

⁶⁹⁴ James, M. R., *Catalogue of the Manuscripts Corpus Christi*, p. 150

fact that a timber chapel would not suffice and a stone edifice should be erected instead. John Brame relates that the prior's reluctance to commit to the task was not overcome until the Blessed Virgin appeared in yet another series of visions, this time to a woman of the town, who, having failed to convince the prior, was afflicted with lameness in her arm, after which the project was duly undertaken and the woman's arm was healed after a votive wax offering in the shape of the arm was made to the Blessed Virgin. In the course of renovations to the statue of the Virgin Mary a painter cleaning the head found it to be hollow and, after alerting the prior, it was found to be filled with the relics of many saints.⁶⁹⁵ The head proved to be a cornucopia indeed; it contained pieces of "the purple robe of our Lord...the girdle of St. Mary...the Lord's sepulchre...the rock of Calvary...the sepulchre of St. Mary...the Lord's manger...the earth found in the sepulchre of St. John the Evangelist...the wooden coffin of St. Edmund...the wooden coffin of St. Etheldred...the grave [clothes] of St. Lazarus and of his sepulchre".⁶⁹⁶ Besides these secondary relics there were also pieces of saints, namely of "St. Vincent the martyr; St. Leodgar the martyr; the hair of St. Agnes, virgin and martyr; St. Barbara, virgin and martyr; St. Gregory; St. Leonard; St. Jerom...and of many others whose merits and names God knows".⁶⁹⁷ The circumstances in which the relics were apparently placed inside the head of the statue of the Virgin Mary are curious indeed. Together with the relics a letter from William, "humble minister of the church of Merlesham [Martlesham, Suffolk]"⁶⁹⁸ was found, addressed to "Stephen prior of the church of Thetford".⁶⁹⁹ Stephen served as prior from 1107 and continued to do so until at least 1118.⁷⁰⁰ The letter goes on to say that the relics were "caused to be procured"⁷⁰¹ by Ralf "your monk"⁷⁰² and were being sent to Thetford at the request of Hugh Bigod and Ralf the monk. Prior to them being gifted to Thetford, they had been "laid up in the said image of the holy mother of God [and] in conjunction with Ralf of Caen [and] lady Matilda of Saxmundham...set up...in the refectory"⁷⁰³

⁶⁹⁵ Martin, T. & Gough, R., (ed.), *The History of the town of Thetford, in the Counties of Norfolk and Suffolk, from the earliest Accounts to the present time*, (London, 1779), pp. 81-83 (Appendix)

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 85

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 84

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid

⁷⁰⁰ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 2, p. 107

⁷⁰¹ Martin & Gough, *History of Thetford*, p. 85

⁷⁰² Ibid

⁷⁰³ Ibid

(presumably of the church of Martlesham). This information is both intriguing and deeply unsatisfactory. It seems fitting that Hugh Bigod would seek to enrich his father's foundation with new relics and therefore brought his influence to bear on their transferral, but no indication is given as to why they were in the possession of the church of Martlesham in the first place. The careful phrasing of Ralf, the Thetford monk, 'causing to procure' the relics does not really illuminate how they were gathered, but the letter says that "the sacred relics, transmitted to our [i.e. Martlesham] church [came] from the most holy sepulchre of our Lord".⁷⁰⁴ The mention of Ralph of Caen in conjunction with relics somehow procured from the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem offers an intriguing possibility. Previous writers on the subject have relayed his name, but have not attached any significance to it. It may however be more than coincidental that relics originating from the church of the Holy Sepulchre are connected with the name Ralph of Caen. Assuming that this is the same Ralph of Caen who authored the *Gesta Tancredi*⁷⁰⁵ and who seemingly served as a canon in Jerusalem in around 1118⁷⁰⁶ there seems every possibility that he was the original procurer of a number of the relics found in the statue of Our Lady. The Martlesham minister's letter does not give any indication of its date, but accepting for a moment the supposition that Ralph of Caen, the "beloved friend" of the monk Ralf is indeed synonymous with the author of the *Gesta Tancredi*, and furthermore assuming that the mention of "my lord Hugh Bigot" is indicative of the latter at this point already having come into his inheritance a relatively narrow date range for the original arrival of the statue, and the relics, at Thetford can be arrived at. Stephen of Provence is attested prior of Thetford until 1118, although Blomefield suggests that he may have continued in the role until 1130.⁷⁰⁷ Hugh Bigod succeeded to his family's estates in 1120, after the death of his half-brother in the *White Ship* disaster of 1120, the same year he was appointed royal steward.⁷⁰⁸ Of Ralph of Caen's movement in this period we know very little, other than that he was in Jerusalem in 1118 and that he most likely died in

⁷⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 85

⁷⁰⁵ Bachrach, B. S. & Bachrach, D. S., trans., *The Gesta Tancredi of Ralph of Caen: A History of the Normans on the First Crusade*, (Farnham, 2005), pp. 1-5

⁷⁰⁶ Hodgson, N, 'Reinventing Normans as Crusaders? Ralph of Caen's *Gesta Tancredi*' in Lewis, C. P., ed., *Anglo-Norman Studies: XXX. Proceedings of the Battle Conference 2007*, (Woodbridge, 2008), pp.: 117-132, p. 117

⁷⁰⁷ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 2, p. 107

⁷⁰⁸ www.oxforddnb.com/article2376, accessed on 14.10.15

1130.⁷⁰⁹ The only period where there is a potential overlap between the three then is between 1120 and 1130. Ralph of Caen's interest in Holy Sepulchre relics is not surprising, given that he was tutored and later patronised by Arnulf of Chocques,⁷¹⁰ who just days after his appointment as the first Latin patriarch of Jerusalem had serendipitously rediscovered the True Cross in the church of the Holy Sepulchre.⁷¹¹ Accepting the above assumptions, the sequence of events seems to be that Ralph of Caen, most likely during his time as canon in Jerusalem, acquired relics from the church of the Holy Sepulchre and brought them with him on his return to the West, where they ended up in a church within the heartlands of the Bigod estates in Suffolk. Why Ralph may have chosen to surrender the relics to the control of the Bigod family or at any rate to a cleric within their sphere of influence is outwith the present terms of this survey and requires further investigation. This interpretation of the tantalizing facts preserved by John Brame's transcription of the letter from the "humble minister"⁷¹² of Mertlesham is of course nothing but putative, but it nevertheless offers the possibility of a thread to connect one of the greatest religious and geo-political upheavals of the High Middle Ages to a relatively modest East Anglian priory and its efforts to attract pilgrims to its newly built chapel of St. Mary. Three such pilgrims who experienced miracles with the aid of St. Mary of Thetford are mentioned in the account of John Brame. Two are Thetford locals, a woman whose child was miraculously revived after being laid in front of the statue of the Virgin and another who lost the use of her tongue and was cured after making a monetary offering to the shrine. This second miracle also features the well-worn miracle trope of competition between shrines since the woman was initially advised to seek the intercession of the Virgin Mary at her shrine in Woolpit, but was reluctant to do so, preferring the newly renovated Thetford shrine (see Woolpit). The third account concerns the revival of a child run over by a cart in the nearby village of Hockham (now Great Hockham), whose parents vowed to undertake a pilgrimage to Thetford naked, in return for the miracle.⁷¹³ No other miracle accounts from Thetford survive and the popularity and breadth of appeal of this

⁷⁰⁹ Bachrach & Bachrach, *Gesta Tancredi*, pp. 1-5

⁷¹⁰ Ibid

⁷¹¹ Fink, H. S., ed., Ryan, F. S., trans., *Fulcher of Chartres: A History of the Expedition to Jerusalem, 1095-1127*, (New York, 1969), p. 125

⁷¹² Martin & Gough, *History of Thetford*, p. 84

⁷¹³ Martin & Gough, *History of Thetford*, p. 84

shrine can only be guessed at. The fortunes of the priory certainly seemed to undergo an upswing in the latter half of the thirteenth century. The number of monks increased from thirteen at the time of the re-building of the Lady Chapel to twenty-four in 1276.⁷¹⁴ In the report of a Cluniac visitation carried out in 1279 the priory is commended for the good upkeep of its buildings and the quality of the church and cloisters.⁷¹⁵ In the *Taxatio* of Pope Nicholas IV the priory's temporalities and spiritualities were assessed at £123 12s 5d.⁷¹⁶ For comparison the *Taxatio* assessment for Walsingham priory at this time was just below £80.⁷¹⁷ But while the entry for Walsingham preserves the detail that a quarter of the assessed value was derived from offerings to the chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary,⁷¹⁸ no such entry can be found for Thetford. The argument in favour of placing great import on the newly erected Lady Chapel and its power to attract pilgrims and offerings, thereby effecting this upswing in the priory's fortunes, must therefore remain putative. If the priory did indeed attract considerable number of pilgrims to its Marian shrine, then they have left remarkably little mark in the primary sources available. Blomfield asserts "that this chapel was so remarkable, and kept up its credit among the vulgar till its utter suppression",⁷¹⁹ but rests his case solely on the above detailed account by John Brame. There are scattered references, such as the will of Peter Payn of 1459, that hint at the continued presence of the shrine as a pilgrimage destination in the later Middle Ages,⁷²⁰ but no indications that its popularity rivalled those of the great East Anglian shrines detailed in the preceding chapters.

⁷¹⁴ Duckett, G. F., trans., ed., *Charters and Records among the Archives of the ancient Abbey of Cluni from 1077 to 1534*, Volume II, (Lewes, 1888), p. 127, see also Bernard & Bruel, eds., *Chartes de L'Abbaye de Cluny*, Volume 6, (Paris, 1903), p. 685

⁷¹⁵ Ibid, "...ecclesia et claustrum preclara et bona...", p. 142

⁷¹⁶ Page, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 2, p. 363

⁷¹⁷ Ibid, p. 395

⁷¹⁸ *Taxatio Ecclesiastica Angliae et Walliae*, Record Commission, (London, 1802), p. 108

⁷¹⁹ Blomfield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 2, p. 119

⁷²⁰ Blomfield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 1, p. 357

2.21. Thorpe Hamlet

Situated not far from the eastern bank of the Wensum and facing the Cathedral precinct across the river lay the priory of St. Leonard's. According to the first register of the Cathedral Priory, St. Leonard's was founded by Herbert Losinga who "built the church of St. Leonard on a certain hill of that wood [Thorpe Wood] and the Chapel of St. Michael next the aforesaid Church...and in the same Church...he placed certain monks while the Church [Norwich Cathedral Priory] was being built".⁷²¹ But even after the work across the river had advanced sufficiently to allow the monks to move into their new quarters in the Cathedral precinct a small number (Bensly suggests that they numbered seven or eight⁷²²) permanently remained at the site in Thorpe Wood. The cell was dependent on Norwich Cathedral Priory both financially and for the appointment of their own prior. The landed endowment of this cell was extremely sparse and may not have amounted to much more than a few small pieces of land in Taverham and Thorpe and small grants of rents in the same locations.⁷²³ Not much can be said regarding the history of this cell and its popularity as a centre for pilgrimage during its first two centuries. Preserved in the records of Norwich Cathedral are however 140 rolls pertaining to the financial activities of this cell from the year 1348 until 1536. The series is not without gaps and duplicates, but is sufficiently complete to allow the reconstruction of a reasonably coherent narrative regarding its attractiveness as a centre for pilgrimage. Blomefield writes that "St. Leonard's church was of great note for a famous image of good King Henry VI. which was visited by pilgrims far and near, some of which affirmed, they were, and many others resorted hither in hope to be cured of their diseases: so that the offerings to the good King, and the images of the Holy Virgin, the Holy Cross, and St. Anthony, brought in a good round annual sum".⁷²⁴ This statement is echoed by Bensly in his account of the priory.⁷²⁵ Page wrote that no accounts for the income for the image of Henry VI were

⁷²¹ Saunders, H. W., ed., *The First Register of Norwich Cathedral Priory*, (Norwich, 1939), pp. 30-1

⁷²² Bensly, W. T., 'St. Leonard's Priory, Norwich', *Norfolk Archaeology* XII (1895), pp. 190-228, p. 192

⁷²³ Norwich Record Office, DCN 2/3/1-140, see also Heale, M. R. V., 'Veneration and renovation at a small Norfolk priory: St. Leonard's, Norwich in the later middle ages', *Historical Research* 76 (2003), pp. 431-49, p. 433

⁷²⁴ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 4, pp. 426-7

⁷²⁵ "The church was afterwards of great note for an image of King Henry VI., which was visited by pilgrims...some of whom reported extraordinary cures to have been performed at it.", Bensly, 'St. Leonard's', p. 193

recorded and that offerings to the shrine of St. Leonard only accounted for 6 ½ d.⁷²⁶ It must be surmised that none of these authors actually had access to the rolls, since their statements do not tally with the rolls evidence in any way. Blomefield is entirely correct in saying that the offerings of the pilgrims brought in a good annual sum, but his estimation of the popularity of the image of Henry VI is not borne out by the rolls evidence. The most popular image at St. Leonard's does rather curiously given its name, not even get a mention in Blomefield's account. The image of St. Leonard is recorded consistently in the rolls and does indeed seem to contribute significantly to the upkeep of this otherwise economically unviable cell. Annual income from offerings to his image of course varies, but in the middle years of the fifteenth century is occasionally more than thirty pounds (see figure 49 below). The roll for the year 1435 lists expenses as £24 15s. 3 ½ d., significantly below the average income of the shrine of St. Leonard in this period. Historical interest in this shrine has been surprisingly low, given its evident popularity and importance. Comparing these income figures with other, much more well-known English pilgrimage shrines, it becomes clear that in terms of contemporary popularity St. Leonard's outstripped many of these (see figure 50 below). The reasons for this popularity and undoubted regional or even national importance are hard to define. Leonard was a sixth century Frankish hermit who was, according to his eleventh century Life converted to Christianity by Remigius (the so called 'Apostle of the Franks') and was the founder of the abbey of Noblat in the Limousin.⁷²⁷ His cult only came to prominence following the composition of his Life sometime in the earlier eleventh century and a pilgrimage of thanksgiving made by Bohemond I following his release from Muslim captivity in 1103, which he attributed to St. Leonard.⁷²⁸ Thereafter his cult spread rapidly throughout Europe. By the later Middle Ages, St. Leonard was one of the most popular saints venerated in the western church.

⁷²⁶ Page, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 2, p. 329

⁷²⁷ Another priory dedicated to St. Leonard was equally founded in Great Bricett, Suffolk under the protection of Herbert Losinga, but became a daughter house of the above abbey of Noblat in the late thirteenth century, and was suppressed in 1414. See Fairweather, F. H., 'Excavations on the site of the Augustinian alien Priory of Great Bricett, Suffolk', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute for Archaeology & History XIX*, (1926), pp. 99-109 and Page, W., ed., *A History of the County of Suffolk*, Volume 2, (London, 1975), pp. 94-95

⁷²⁸ Farmer, *Dictionary of Saints*, p. 320

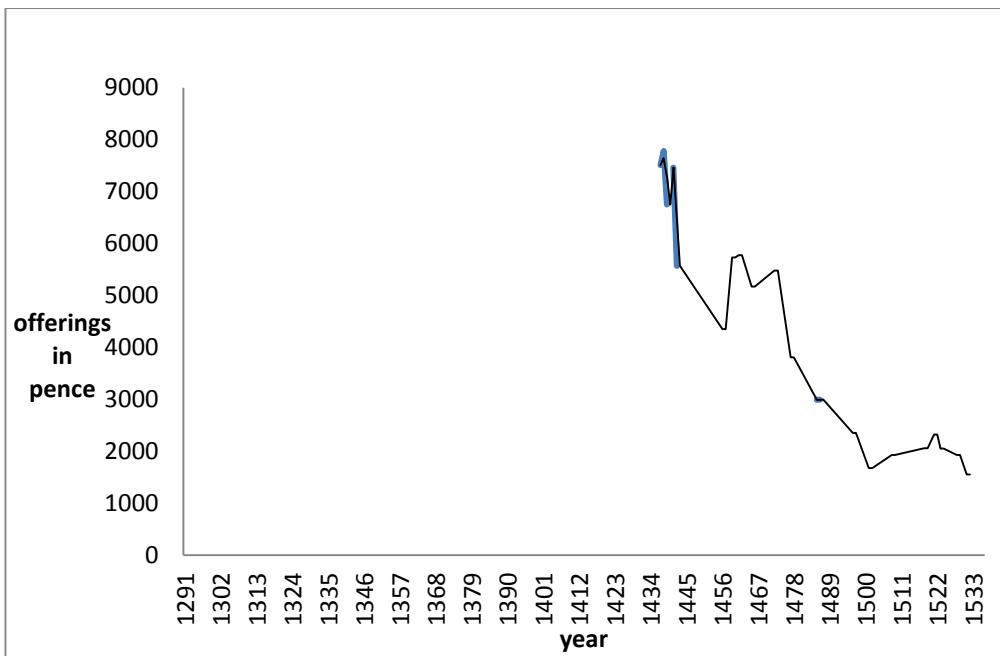


Figure 49: Income from offerings to the shrine of St. Leonard at St. Leonard's priory⁷²⁹

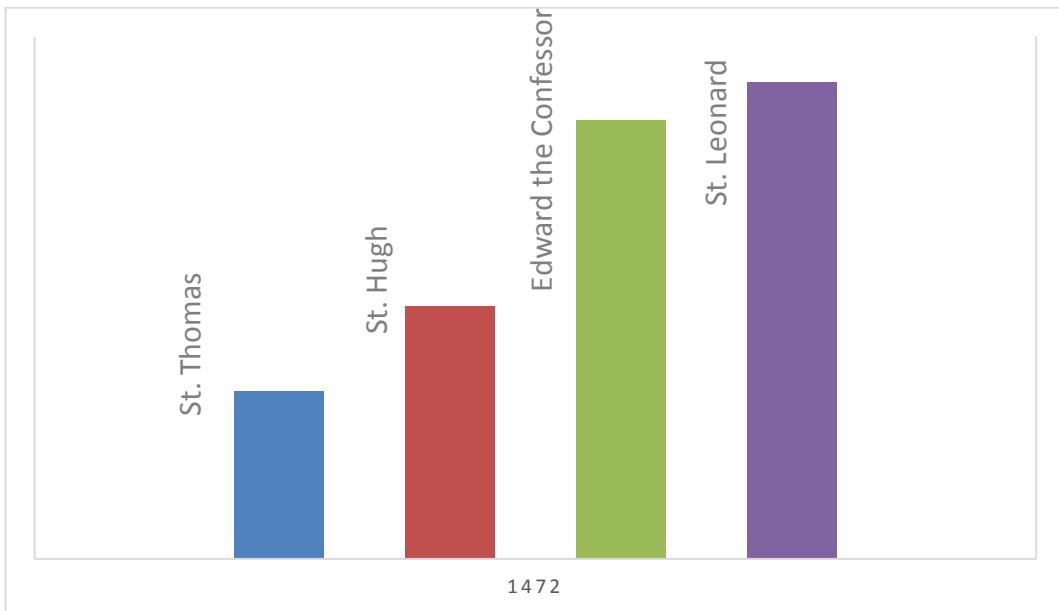


Figure 50: Comparative offerings for the year 1472: Thomas Becket at Canterbury Cathedral, Hugh of Lincoln at Lincoln Cathedral, Edward the Confessor at Westminster Abbey⁷³⁰ and St. Leonard at St. Leonard's priory

⁷²⁹ Graph by author, compiled from data in NRO, DCN 2/3/52, 53, 55-57, 68, 71, 74, 77, 82, 87, 91, 92, 102, 107, 110, 117, 121, 125, 132, 134

⁷³⁰ Graph by author, income figures from Nilson, *Cathedral Shrines*, pp. 215, 225, 230

At the time of the dedication of the priory his popularity was still relatively limited. Given his later popularity he is somewhat underrepresented in terms of dedications in medieval Norfolk; only two churches are dedicated to him in the county. His cult seems to have increased in popularity and he is depicted on seven surviving East Anglian rood screens (Beeston-next-Mileham, Gressenhall, Hempstead, Horsham St. Faith, Norwich St. John de Sepulchre, Norwich St. John Maddermarket all in Norfolk and Westhall in Suffolk⁷³¹). The most prominent miracle in his hagiography concerns the wife of Clovis who was healed and safely delivered of a child through the intercession of St. Leonard and accordingly his most notable patronage concerns pregnant women and by extension perhaps the afflicted in general, as well as prisoners and captives (in accordance with the role he was credited by Bohemond). The shrine is mentioned in a letter of 1443 written by Margaret Paston to her husband John following the latter's illness: "I recomande me to yow...thanckyng God of yowr mendyng of the grete dysese that ye have hade;...My moder be hestyd a nodyr ymmage of wax of the weytte of yow to oyer Lady of Walsyngham...and I have be hestyd to gon on pylgrymmays to Walsingham, and to Sent Levenardys [St. Leonard's]".⁷³² The implication of Margaret Paston's vows of pilgrimage seem to be that at least in her personal estimation, Walsingham and St. Leonard's are the most efficacious shrines to visit in the matter of her husband's 'grete dysese'. The shrine also occurs relatively frequently in pilgrimage bequests made in Norfolk wills.⁷³³ Income to the shrine of St. Leonard began to tail off in the latter decades of the fifteenth century, but remained high when compared with other shrines in the region up until the 1530s and is one of the very few monastic shrines in East Anglia not to experience a precipitous decline in offerings and popularity. Quite why this was the case must remain a matter for conjecture and is even more surprising given the Cathedral Priory's difficulties in attracting any pilgrims to its shrines in this period. The two sites lay barely three hundred metres apart and from a landscape perspective could well be regarded as a single locus with several distinct focal points. In that case it could be expected that pilgrims may have moved from one to the other in a processional fashion similar to the oft mentioned 'visiting of the

⁷³¹ Baker, *English Panel Paintings*, p. 236

⁷³² Gairdner, *Paston letters*, Volume 2, p. 55

⁷³³ See for example the will of Alice Cooke who leaves a bequest for a pilgrimage to "St. Leonard's without Norwich"

stations' at pilgrimages to Rome. In fact, the opposite seems to have been the case; judging from the offerings income, perhaps several thousand pilgrims visited St. Leonard's every year, but the great majority seems to have avoided visiting the Cathedral at the same time, or if they did, they certainly did not feel the need to leave offerings in any of the many boxes placed near the images of saints there. Perhaps though this is to misinterpret the evidence and disregard the way medieval pilgrims may have perceived this space. If indeed the perception was of one locus under the control of the same community of monks, then it may be invalid to separate the Cathedral priory and St. Leonard's priory in this way. Instead it could be argued that the Cathedral priory was indeed a successful centre for pilgrimage, but that its most popular shrine happened to be located not inside the priory church, but in the church of St. Leonard's. Pilgrims may well have visited the cathedral, but left offerings only at the location they perceived as the most efficacious, in this case seemingly at the image of St. Leonard. A similar scenario is also set out in the case of St. William (see Norwich Cathedral), with the possibility that the most popular focal point for devotion to this saint may have been his chapel on Mousehold Heath, rather than his shrine in the cathedral (and indeed would also have been a part of this pilgrimage townscape). For the visiting pilgrim, who was not afforded the modern bird's eye view of maps and the clear distinction imposed by post medieval ownership divisions of this area the entire site may not have had the appearance of many distinct loci, but a more or less cohesive whole, within which the individual was free to bestow their offering on the most favoured saint.⁷³⁴

2.22. Tibenham

The church of All Saints at Tibenham offers evidence of a number of different building phases throughout the medieval period, with late eleventh or early twelfth century Norman work, thirteenth century decorated features as well as fourteenth and fifteenth century perpendicular architecture all present.⁷³⁵ The east end of the south aisle was

⁷³⁴ Thomas of Monmouth makes reference to pilgrims visiting the "holy places of the city" in his *vita* of St. William, James & Jessop, *Thomas of Monmouth*, p. 279

⁷³⁵ Pevsner & Wilson, *Norfolk 2*, pp. 730-731

designated a chapel of St. Nicholas. Blomefield records the evidence from a will of John Blomefield from Norwich, who in 1506 bequeathed 1000 paving tiles to the paving of the chapel of St. Nicholas.⁷³⁶ This seems to indicate that the building of this chapel was underway (or was about to begin) in that year. A will from Thorndon in Suffolk of 1454 however mentions a pilgrimage to “St. Nicholas in Tibenham”⁷³⁷ providing evidence for his veneration at this church around half a century before the supposed building of his chapel. It may be that his fame and appeal in the fifteenth century were such, that it was deemed necessary to institute his image in its own chapel or it may equally be the case that the chapel was simply re-fitted in the early sixteenth century and had been in existence before then (the south aisle, where the chapel was located was constructed in the fourteenth century⁷³⁸). The evidence, as is almost always the case in late medieval image shrines housed in parish churches, is extremely sparse, but the above mentioned bequests are sufficiently out of the ordinary to allow some speculation regarding the importance of this shrine. John Blomefield was a public notary and “principal register to the bishop”⁷³⁹ and was a resident of the parish of St. Martin at the plain in Norwich. It is not known whether he had any connection in the form of family ties or the like to the parish of Tibenham or the church of All Saints there which may explain his extreme generosity in the support of this building project. His attachment to the All Saints did not end there; he also left provision in his will for his wife to keep his obit there every year and five marks for a priest to sing masses there for one year.⁷⁴⁰ John Blomefield evidently had a special relationship with St. Nicholas as he also in his will left a robe lined with purple satin for the boy-bishop⁷⁴¹ to wear in honour of St. Nicholas. It may then be possible to explain the connection between the church at Tibenham and John Blomefield in terms of the saint venerated there rather than the location of any putative family ties. If this is the case, then John Blomefield’s bequest may be indicative of this shrine’s regional popularity in the early sixteenth century. St. Nicholas was of course a universally

⁷³⁶ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 5, p. 278

⁷³⁷ Northeast, P., ed., *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury, 1439-1474, Wills from the Register ‘Baldwyne’, Part I: 1439-1461*, (Woodbridge, 2001), p. 377

⁷³⁸ Pevsner & Wilson, *Norfolk 2*, p. 730

⁷³⁹ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 4, p. 369

⁷⁴⁰ *Ibid*

⁷⁴¹ The reign of the boy-bishop lasted from St. Nicholas Day (6th of December) until the feast of the Holy Innocents (28th of December), Rigold, ‘The St. Nicholas or ‘Boy Bishop’ tokens’, p. 87

popular saint and in Norfolk alone twenty-nine churches are dedicated to his honour⁷⁴² (although he only occurs on surviving rood screen in East Anglia). A chapel to St. Nicholas was located less than a mile from St. Martin at the plain in Bracondale (see Bracondale) in Norwich, yet John Blomefield chose to make a bequest in honour of the same saint to a location more than ten times more distant. This surely must point towards its popularity, which equally holds true of the will of Alice London of Thorndon (some twenty miles from Tibenham⁷⁴³). This interpretation of the admittedly extremely sparse evidence points towards a late medieval image shrine of at least regional fame.

2.23. Trimingham

The medieval parish church of Trimingham is the only English church dedicated to St. John the Baptist's Head (the dedication to John the Baptist is on the other hand one of the most common medieval church dedications with almost five hundred examples throughout the country⁷⁴⁴). Two other English churches (Doddington, Kent and Coln St Aldwyns, Gloucestershire) are dedicated to the Decollation of John the Baptist, which refers to the feast of the same name (29th of August). It is possible that the church of Trimingham was originally also dedicated to this feast and that the dedication has since become corrupted. The church at Trimingham was said to have a head of John the Baptist (there seems to be some confusion as to whether this was said to have been an actual primary head relic or an image of the head of John the Baptist, see below), which gained a reputation as a locally notable object of pilgrimage and veneration. It has been cited, both in academic writing⁷⁴⁵ on the subject and in local histories and guides as an "important place of pilgrimage".⁷⁴⁶ Blomefield notes that "in this church was...a famous relick in times

⁷⁴² Linnell, *Church Dedications*, p. 6

⁷⁴³ There is also a possibility that 'Tibenham' is a variant spelling of Debenham. The parishes of Thorndon and Debenham are barely a mile apart and although no evidence for this could be found it is eminently possible that the church at Debenham held an image of St. Nicholas which may have been locally venerated.

⁷⁴⁴ Farmer, *Saints*, p. 277

⁷⁴⁵ Susan Morrison seems to suggest that the local clergy claimed that it was a head relic of John the Baptist and that "consequently pilgrims flocked there", Morrison, S. S., *Women Pilgrims in Late medieval England*, (London, 2000), p. 52

⁷⁴⁶ <http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/view/NCC129219>, accessed on 23.01.16, see also Churches of East Anglia: Norfolk, <http://www.norfolkchurches.co.uk/trimingham/trimingham.htm>, accessed on 23.0.16

of popery, the head of St. John the Baptist, to which pilgrimages, great worship, and offerings were made".⁷⁴⁷ Blomefield goes on to cite the will of Alice Cooke (dated 1478) as evidence for this. In fact, it seems that all subsequent assertions regarding the importance of the pilgrimage to this church and the fame of this 'relick' go back to this single mention of a bequest made by a late medieval Norfolk testator. The nature of the object of her veneration is far from clear; most recent commentators on the subject⁷⁴⁸ have chosen to assume it was an alabaster image of St. John's head, rather than a primary relic. Alabaster images of the head of St. John the Baptist were common in England during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries and seem to have been used primarily as objects of private veneration and contemplation in prosperous households.⁷⁴⁹ The vast majority of these heads was produced in Nottingham, although Norwich has also been suggested as a local centre for alabaster carving⁷⁵⁰ and one such head was recorded in the will of John Baker (1518) at Norwich.⁷⁵¹ Given the ubiquity of such images it seems likely that the Trimingham head was indeed an alabaster carving of this type. This does of course not explain the unusual dedication of this church, which pre-dates the beginnings of the domestic alabaster industry by at least half a century (the earliest surviving architectural features in this church can be dated to the late thirteenth century⁷⁵² whereas no English alabasters are known that can be dated to before the middle of the fourteenth century). The question arising from this anomaly is whether the dedication has always been to the Head of John the Baptist, or is a corrupted form of a dedication of the feast day of the Decollation. Should the original dedication have been to the head, then this may imply the presence of a primary relic of the Baptist in this church. The narrative concerning the successive discoveries and re-discoveries of the relics of the Baptist, and

⁷⁴⁷ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 8, p. 179

⁷⁴⁸ See Churches of East Anglia: Norfolk, <http://www.norfolkchurches.co.uk/trimingham/trimingham.htm>, accessed on 23.01.16 and www.trimingham.org, accessed on 23.01.16.

⁷⁴⁹ An investigation of Probate Court inventories from Canterbury spanning the period from 1490 to 1539 has found sixteen alabaster heads of St. John the Baptist and a legal dispute between the alabaster carver Nicholas Hill and his employee William Bott in Nottingham in 1491 makes reference to "fifty-eight heads of St. John the Baptist", Cheetham, F., *English Medieval Alabasters*, (Oxford, 1984), p. 28

⁷⁵⁰ Gardner, A., *English Medieval Sculpture*, (Cambridge, 1951), p. 18

⁷⁵¹ Cheetham, *Alabasters*, p. 31

⁷⁵² Norfolk Heritage Explorer, <http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/record-details?MNF6805-St-John-the-Baptist>, accessed on 25.01.16

their spread into Europe from Jerusalem and Constantinople, need not detain us here,⁷⁵³ but suffice it to say that the relics of such a universal and popular biblical saint were highly prized and, while not being especially rare, were more usually found in large and wealthy monastic communities and cathedrals, rather than in remote village churches. It is not impossible however to envision a narrative similar to the one that led to the establishment of the cult of the Holy Rood at nearby Bromholm (see Bromholm) with a relic of dubious pedigree and authenticity being embraced by the local community. Should the church have been dedicated to the Decollation, it would seem more likely that the object of veneration was an image in the form of a statue or panel depicting the head of St. John the Baptist. Whether this image was indeed an alabaster carving, as has been suggested, largely depends on the antiquity of the cult at this location. The only scrap of primary evidence merely indicates some activity in the late fifteenth century. Whatever the nature of the image or relic venerated it does not seem tenable, on the basis of the surviving evidence, to describe Trimingham as an important centre of medieval pilgrimage in Norfolk. It seems more likely to belong to the category of late medieval, local image shrines with a fairly limited geographical reach and popularity.

2.24. West Acre

The Augustinian priory of St. Mary and All Saints at West Acre was founded by Ralph de Tosny⁷⁵⁴ during his years as lord of the Tosny fee (c. 1102-1126). Vincent favours a date nearer the beginning of the period.⁷⁵⁵ The priory was dissolved on 31 August 1534.⁷⁵⁶ According to Blomefield the monks of the priory boasted during the last visitation of the

⁷⁵³ See Kazan, G., *The head of St. John the Baptist – the early evidence*, www.sjc.ox.ac.uk/3775/, accessed on 24.01.16, for a detailed discussion on the repeated 'discoveries' of the relics of John the Baptist between the 4th and the 9th centuries.

⁷⁵⁴ Ralph de Tosny's father was one of the Barons present at the battle of Hastings and was accordingly rewarded with extensive lands following the conquest, Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 9, p. 158

⁷⁵⁵ The foundation charter of Westacre is in fact a confirmation of a foundation of one Olivet, a priest, who established the community on the Tosny lands in Westacre. Its organisation as an Augustinian priory may have been undertaken in the middle of the twelfth century. See Vincent, N., 'The Foundation of Westacre Priory (1102x1126)', *Norfolk Archaeology* 41, (1993), pp. 490-4, p. 490

⁷⁵⁶ Gairdner, J., ed., *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII*, Volume 7, 1534, (London, 1883), pp. 421-433, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol7/pp421-433>, accessed on 06.02.14

priory that they had a relic of a finger of St. Andrew, set in silver, which they had pawned for £40 some time previously.⁷⁵⁷ The relic seems never to have been redeemed and disappears from the historical record. No evidence survives to suggest that this finger relic engendered any particular devotion or that pilgrimages were made to it, but it must not seriously be doubted that the reliquary would have been made available for viewing in return for a small donation. The priory had a cell at nearby Custthorpe (a deserted medieval village less than a mile from West Acre) with a chapel dedicated to Thomas Becket. Edward IV granted the priory the right to hold a fair at the site on the day of the translation of Thomas Becket (7th of July).⁷⁵⁸ Such a mid-summer fair would undoubtedly have brought visitors to the chapel of St. Thomas and may even have provided an opportunity to display the relic of St. Andrew. Richard Taylor asserts that this chapel was "much used by pilgrims",⁷⁵⁹ but sadly does not cite any primary source evidence in defence of this claim. The only mention of a pilgrimage to this chapel can be found in the will of William Balle from Elsing who, in the year 1480, left a bequest for two pilgrimages to Thomas Becket, one to "seynt Thom[a]s of Canterbery"⁷⁶⁰ and one "to seynt Thom[a]s of Westaker".⁷⁶¹ Such a paucity of evidence pertaining to pilgrim activity either in relation to the priory or the associated chapel of St. Thomas seems to indicate that the priory monks were less than wholly successful in any attempt to establish themselves as a local focal point for pilgrimage.

2.25. West Dereham

The possibility of a secondary focal point for the cult of St. Withburgha at West Dereham has been raised by a number of writers,⁷⁶² owing to the ambiguous meaning of 'Dereham' employed in the *Liber Eliensis*, the two recensions of St. Withburgha's Life and the

⁷⁵⁷ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 9, p. 161

⁷⁵⁸ Page, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 2 p. 402

⁷⁵⁹ Taylor, R., *Index Monasticus*, (London, 1821), p. 66

⁷⁶⁰ Harrod, H., 'Extracts from Early Norfolk Wills', *Norfolk Archaeology* I (1847), pp. 111-128, p. 115

⁷⁶¹ *Ibid*

⁷⁶² Pevsner & Wilson, *Norfolk* 2, p.: 282, Davison, A., 'The Dereham controversy: Further thoughts', *The Quarterly (Norfolk Historical and Archaeological Research Group)*, (1993), pp. 16-18, Bond, R. & Penn, K. & Rogerson, A., *The North Folk; Angles, Saxons and Danes*, (Cromer, 1990), p. 33

marginal entry in the F recension of the ASC to name the place of her monastic foundation. There is no direct textual or archaeological evidence to back up this claim. The archaeological evidence,⁷⁶³ such as it is, seems to suggest greater activity in West rather than (East) Dereham during the middle Saxon period, but owing to the lack of a systematic survey in both cases this may simply be a matter of the random distribution of chance finds, rather than a reflection of the likely historical reality. Oblique evidence pointing to an interest in the cult of Withburgha in West Dereham and its environs can be found in the later Middle Ages (see Dereham and Holkham for details); this evidence is at best suggestive of an attempt to co-opt the cult in the interests of the local Premonstratensian Abbey, but may equally well be coincidental. Given the current state of historical and archaeological knowledge concerning this issue it seems prudent to assume that St. Withburgha's cult was from its inception firmly located in and associated with Dereham.

2.26. Winfarthing

The church at Winfarthing is dedicated to St. Mary and the majority of the standing elevation dates from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, with some later fifteenth century work apparent in the porch and the aisle and evidence for an earlier building in the form of a Norman font.⁷⁶⁴ This church has gained a certain notoriety among medieval East Anglian pilgrimage locations for the nature of the relic apparently venerated there. The 'Good Sword of Winfarthing' is an object that has exercised many antiquarian writers who decried the "superstitious and corrupt age of monachism"⁷⁶⁵ in general and the "wily"⁷⁶⁶ clergy, who exploited the credulity of the supplicants at this church in particular. Thomas Becon gives an account of this curious relic in his *Reliques of Rome*:

⁷⁶³ Norfolk Heritage Explorer, <http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/record-details?TNF1642>, accessed on 21.01.16

⁷⁶⁴ Pevsner & Wilson, *Norfolk 2*, p. 783

⁷⁶⁵ White, W., *History, Gazetteer and Directory, of Norfolk, and the City and County of the City of Norwich*, (Sheffield, 1836), p. 745

⁷⁶⁶ White, F., *History, Gazetteer, and Directory, of Norfolk, and the City and County of the City of Norwich*, (Sheffield, 1854), p. 375, see also Armstrong, M. J., *History and Antiquities of the County of Norfolk*, Volume

*"In Winfarthing, a littel village in Norfolke, there was a certeyne Swerd, called the Good Swerd of Winfarthyng, this Swerd was counted so precious a relique, and of so great virtue, that there was a solemne pilgrimage used unto it, with large giftes and offringes, with bow makings, crouchinges, kissinges: This Swerd was visited far and near, for many sundry purposes, but specialy for thinges that were lost, and for horses that were eyther stolen or else rune astray, it helpid also unto the shortning of a married mans life, if that the wyfe which was weary of her husband, would set a candle before that Swerd every Sunday for the space of a whole yeare, no Sunday ercepted, for then all was vain, whatsoever was done before. I have many times heard when I was a child, of diverse ancient men and wemen, that this Swerd was the Swerd of a certayne thief, which took sanctuary in that church pard, and after wards through the negligence of the watchmen escaped, and left his swerd behind him, which being found, and laid up in a certaine old chest, was afterward through the suttle of the parson and the clerk of the same parish, made a precious Relique, full of vertue, able to do much, but specially to enrich the bor, and make fat the parson's pouch."*⁷⁶⁷

Every subsequent report of this relic, of the fame it achieved, and the multitudes of pilgrims who came to visit it, can be traced back to the above account. There is no other primary evidence to corroborate Becon's narrative, either in the archival or the archaeological record. A number of writers on the subject have attributed the, in East Anglian terms, curiously early rebuilding of this church during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to the popularity of this relic and the funds they brought in the form of oblations.⁷⁶⁸ It must however be noted that Brecon does not mention the supposed date of the incident in which the sword was left behind in the church and the beginnings of a cult to this relic may not have occurred after the re-building of the church. Quite apart from the likely timeframe there also remains the question of the reliability of Becon's account. Since his is the only source one has to rely on it may be prudent to

II, (Norwich, 1781), p. 186 and Chambers, J., *A general History of the County of Norfolk*, (Norwich, 1829), p. 133

⁷⁶⁷ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 1, p. 184

⁷⁶⁸ Norfolk Heritage Explorer, [http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/record-details?TNF1625-Parish-Summary-Winfarthing-\(Parish-Summary\)](http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/record-details?TNF1625-Parish-Summary-Winfarthing-(Parish-Summary)), accessed on 15.02.16 and Norfolk Churches, [http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/record-details?TNF1625-Parish-Summary-Winfarthing-\(Parish-Summary\)](http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/record-details?TNF1625-Parish-Summary-Winfarthing-(Parish-Summary)), accessed on 15.02.16

subject it to closer scrutiny. Becon was a reforming clergyman with strong Lutheran leanings. He fell foul of Bishop Bonner's commission in 1541 for his sermons preached in the diocese of Norwich, which were critical of a number of catholic doctrinal matters as well as the cult of the saints.⁷⁶⁹ During the reign of Mary, he was forced to live in exile in Europe and his stance and his writings became more anti-catholic in this latter part of his career. As he himself admitted he "somewhat more sharpened [his] pen in some place against antichrist and his Babylonical brood".⁷⁷⁰ The *Reliques of Rome* were written in exile during this period and must be viewed in this context. Becon was born near Thetford some fifteen miles from Winfothing and taught at St. John's College at Rushford (near Thetford) after his graduation from Cambridge and in all likelihood was familiar with the village and, as he himself states, had heard the curious tale of the sword as a child. The nature of this particular devotion, because of its focus on a relic of such unseemly provenance, must have been particularly distasteful for such an ardent reformer. The tendentious nature of his discourse may however hide a historical reality that bears little resemblance to the narrative. It is eminently possible and even likely that Becon greatly overstated the fame and importance of the relic and its cult for his own purposes. The *topoi* mentioned in the above passage of miracles concerning horses and the removal of a wearisome husband are curiously reminiscent of a passage in Thomas More's *Dialogue concerning heresies*⁷⁷¹ (see footnote below) in which More's fictitious antagonist belabours the simple minded devotion of the common folk in their worship of the saints. Becon cannot have been ignorant of this text and whether consciously or not, he appears

⁷⁶⁹ Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1918?docPos=1>, accessed on 16.02.16

⁷⁷⁰ *Ibid*

⁷⁷¹ "Saint Eligius we make a horse leech...and must let our horse rather run unshod and mar his hooves than to shoe him on his day –which we must, for that point, more religiously keep high and holy than Easter Day! And because one smith is too few at a forge, we set Saint Hippolytus to help him. And on Saint Stephen's Day we must let all our horses blood with a knife...because Saint Stephen was killed with stones. Saint Apollonia we make a tooth-drawer, and may speak to her of nothing but of sore teeth. Saint Zita women set to seek their keys. Saint Roch we set to see the great sickness, because he had a sore. And with him they join Saint Sebastian...because he was martyred with arrows. Some serve for the eye only. And some for a sore breast. Saint Germanus only for children. And yet will he not once look at them but if the mothers bring with them a white loaf and a pot of good ale. And yet is he wiser than Saint Wilgefortis; for she, good soul, is, as they say, served and content with oats. Whereof I cannot perceive the reason...but if it be because she should provide a horse for an evil husband to ride to the devil upon. For that is the thing that she is sought for, as they say. Insomuch that women hath therefore changed her name, and instead of 'Saint Wilgefortis' call her 'Saint Unencumber' –because they reckon that for a peck of oats she will not fail to unencumber them of their husbands. Lawler, T. M. C., ed., *A Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, (London, 1981), p. 227

to conflate these different *topoi* and attributes them to the relic at Winfarthing. It must therefore be doubted whether the ‘Good Sword’ was indeed famed for returning errant horses and ridding wives of their husbands or if these attributes owe more to Becon’s reforming agenda than any genuine fame. The logical extension of this argument must furthermore be to call into question the supposed veneration shown to this relic. The lack of any indication that this object was a secondary relic of some kind makes it unique in terms of East Anglian pilgrimage. This is the only shrine not devoted to a saint with the object of veneration either being primary relics, secondary relics or a special image of the saint. There are instances however where objects became otherwise associated with a locus of pilgrimage, such as for example the fetters displayed in Ely cathedral, which St. Etheldreda struck off a criminal and which attracted pilgrim offerings in their own right throughout the fourteenth century.⁷⁷² It therefore must remain a possibility that the Winfarthing sword initially was given as such an oblation and later attained fame in its own right. The dedication of the church, as well as the evidence for an image of “Our Lady of Peace”, which attracted at least one bequest in the sixteenth century⁷⁷³ would suggest a Marian shrine, which may, given the enormous popularity of St. Mary in East Anglia, account for the curiously early rebuilding of the church. The above does not mean to suggest that the charges of idolatry and syncretism brought by Becon are without cause, merely that the narrative in the shape it is presented is, at best, incomplete and that an earlier and more conventional cult may lie at the heart of this curious case.

⁷⁷² Pugh, R. B., ed., *A History of the County of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely: Volume 4, City of Ely*, (London, 2002), p. 70

⁷⁷³ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 1, p. 181

Pilgrim Souvenirs

One way to supplement the fragmentary and often entirely absent documentary evidence for particular shrines in East Anglia is the study of pilgrim badges and ampullae recovered either as part of archaeological excavations or chance finds within the region. Not only do they yield evidence for East Anglian shrines, but they also shed some light on the shrines visited by East Anglian pilgrims, both within England, and further afield. Such souvenirs are known to have been produced and purchased by pilgrims as early as the sixth century,⁷⁷⁴ but they became a common occurrence at the major pilgrim centres of the European West only in the twelfth century, with the vast majority of recorded finds dating from the later fourteenth to the early sixteenth century. As such their primary use as evidence is in further nuancing the narrative of late medieval pilgrimage.

1.1. The evidence from the continent

Although no evidence survives to accurately assess how many such badges were produced at specific shrines in East Anglia in any given year, figures for their production from the continent may be used to gauge their popularity and importance. In Altötting, Bavaria 130.000 badges were sold to pilgrims visiting the *Gnadenkapelle* in the year 1492 alone,⁷⁷⁵ more than 110.000 badges were sold at Regensburg, Bavaria in 1520 to pilgrims visiting the *schöne Maria*,⁷⁷⁶ and in Einsiedeln in Switzerland a particularly popular pilgrim season apparently led to the sale of around 130.000 badges to pilgrims visiting the *schwarze Madonna*.⁷⁷⁷ Occasionally a glimpse into even the daily minutiae of production

⁷⁷⁴ See for example the terra-cotta *eulogia* tokens found at *Qal'at Sim'ān*, Syria depicting Symeon the Stylite and the extraordinarily detailed sixth or seventh century pewter ampullae in the possession of the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist (who most likely originated in Jerusalem), Vikan, G., *Byzantine Pilgrims' Art*, in Safran, L., ed., *Heaven on Earth, Art and the Church in Byzantium*, (University Park, 1998), pp. 229-266, pp. 233-244

⁷⁷⁵ Raff, T., ed., *Wallfahrt kennt keine Grenzen*, (Munich, 1984), p. 229

⁷⁷⁶ Spencer, *Pilgrim Souvenirs*, p. 14

⁷⁷⁷ Stopford, J., 'Some approaches to the archaeology of Christian pilgrimage', *World Archaeology* 26 (1994), pp. 57-72, p. 57, the image of Mary and the infant Christ worshipped at Einsiedeln bear a striking resemblance to the statue in the *Gnadenkapelle* in Altötting and may serve as evidence for the extraordinary popularity of this type of Marian worship in late medieval continental Europe, and equally, judging from the unprecedented popularity of the pilgrimage to Walsingham, in England.

is possible. At the shrine of St. Job in Wezemaal, Belgium the *tingieter* (tinsmith) Augustijn produced one hundred lead-tin tokens a day, all of whom were purchased by the church to be sold on to pilgrims.⁷⁷⁸ Despite their evident manufacture in huge quantities only a few examples of the Regensburg badges have to date been uncovered,⁷⁷⁹ which suggests a relatively low survival rate for such items. The obvious dangers of extrapolating from such scattered references notwithstanding the evidence points to the fact that where badges survive in any numbers they may have been produced in large quantities. Badges associated with the cult of Richard Caister at St. Stephen's at Norwich have been found both in East Anglia and in a number of other locations across England and at least seven distinct designs can be securely attributed to this cult.⁷⁸⁰ The variety of designs and the number of badges recovered therefore points to a popularity of the cult far greater than that suggested by the documentary evidence alone. Historic Environment Record data for Norfolk alone lists 403 find spots for medieval pilgrim badges and ampullae in the county⁷⁸¹ (see figure 51). Brian Spencer's decades of research and identification of these pilgrim souvenirs and his catalogues of finds from Norfolk and London provide an invaluable point of reference on which to base arguments regarding the relative popularity of certain shrines in the region and the likely extent of fame they may have achieved outside of it.

1.2. Walsingham Souvenirs

Spencer's catalogue of finds from Norfolk details 49 different badges, which may be associated with pilgrimage to Walsingham, and with the exception of three designs which may have been derived from degraded or altered moulds for earlier badges, all the examples have been cast from different moulds (although a number can at best be putatively connected to Walsingham and may well come from other locations). Metal

⁷⁷⁸ Benningen, H. J. E., 'Pelgrimstekens van de Heilige Man Job, Wezemaal' in Benningen, H. J. E. & Koldeweij, A. M., eds., *Heilig en Profaan, 1000 Laat-Middeleeuwse Insignes*, (Cothen, 1993), pp. 79-80, p. 79

⁷⁷⁹ Spencer, *Pilgrim Souvenirs*, p. 14

⁷⁸⁰ Spencer, B., *Medieval Pilgrim Badges from Norfolk*, (Hunstanton, 1980), p. 25, Spencer, B., *Pilgrim Souvenirs*, p. 196-8, Portable Antiquities Scheme,

<https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/447740>, accessed on 14.03.16

⁷⁸¹ 286 ampullae and 117 badges have been recorded by Norfolk Historic Environment Service, see map below

detecting and chance finds have since added to that number. The likely date range for the production of these souvenirs at Walsingham extends through a span of less than two hundred years from the second half of the fourteenth century to the earlier sixteenth century.⁷⁸²

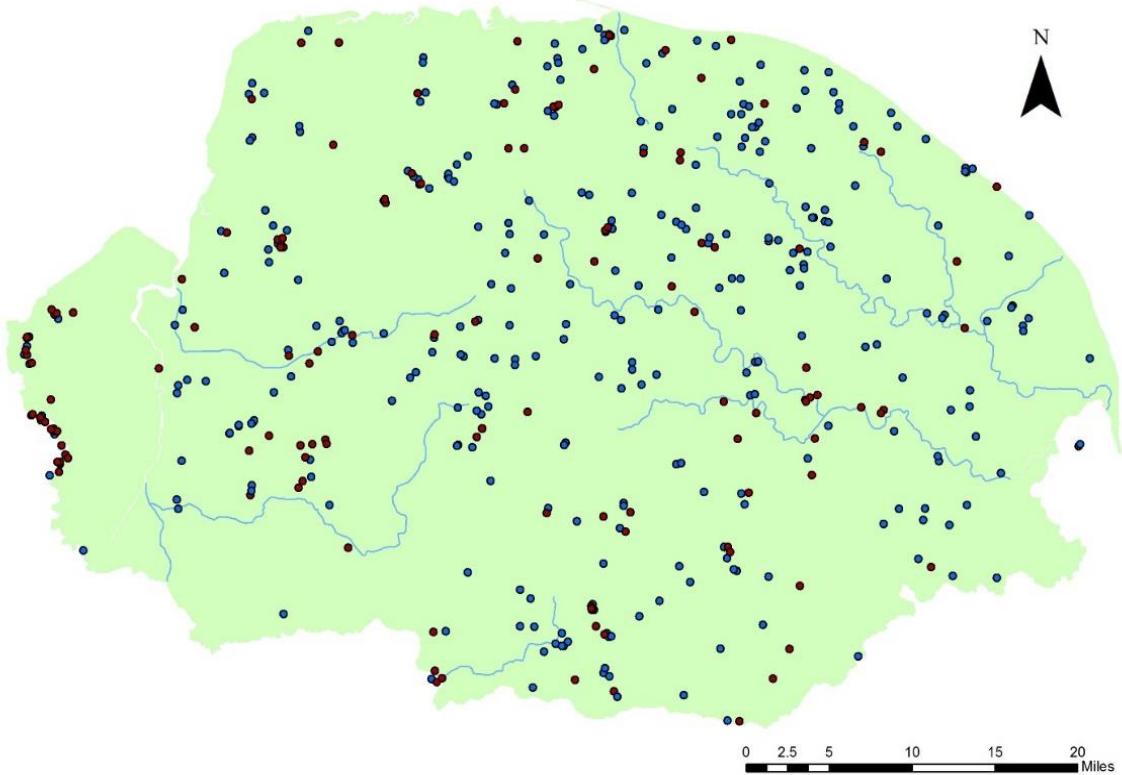


Figure 51: Locations of medieval pilgrim badges (red) and ampullae (blue) found in Norfolk⁷⁸³

In the case of Walsingham, the variety of designs and the apparently huge quantities in which they were cast confirms the popularity of the shrine in late medieval England, but equally affords a glimpse into the subsidiary economic niche based around this, and other, shrines. The variety of badges strongly suggests a very de-centralized means of production, with many different participants. On occasion the custodians of a particular

⁷⁸² Spencer, *Badges from Norfolk*, pp. 10-17

⁷⁸³ Map by author, compiled from HER data, Norfolk Historic Environment Service, <http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/>, not included in this map is the large number of badges found in the Pufleet in King's Lynn during the late nineteenth century and collected by Thomas Pung (now in the collections of King's Lynn Museum), because of the absence of exact find spot data.

shrine attempted to control and dominate the production and distribution of such souvenirs, as was the case in the above mentioned pilgrimage at Regensburg. Such limitation and monopolisation could limit supply and cause shortages, which in their turn may have had adverse effects on the popularity of the shrine. Pilgrims undertaking the *Heiligtumsfahrt* to Aachen, Germany were accustomed to be able to buy *Spiegelzeichen* (badges which incorporated a small mirror or other polished and reflective surface) to gather the thaumaturgical glow emitted by the displayed relics and, presumably, in this way conserve it and take it home with them.⁷⁸⁴ The manufacture of such souvenirs was tightly regulated, not by the church, but through the resident guilds of the goldsmiths and the mirror makers, which relinquished their control only in periods of extraordinary levels of pilgrim activity during jubilee years and allowed the free sale of such trinkets to satisfy the immense demand.⁷⁸⁵ It has to be assumed that the custodians of the Marian shrine at Walsingham were involved in the manufacture and sale of badges and ampullae, possibly even that they may have attempted to limit competition by imposing restrictions on where other vendors could hawk their wares in the vicinity of the shrine or by means of taxation, as was the case at yet another shrine to the virgin at Le-Puy-en-Velay, France, where stalls in the vicinity of the cathedral that housed the shrine were charged considerably higher rates of tax than others in the town.⁷⁸⁶ The diversity of badges in the case of Walsingham reflects not only the multitude of producers and vendors, but equally points to the different predilections of the pilgrims and the variety of focal points for pilgrimage to be sought in Walsingham. A number of badges depict the replica of the Holy House itself, while others show the image of the virgin and child or an Annunciation scene.⁷⁸⁷ One type of badge, of which an example has been found both in Norfolk and in London, shows a monstrance containing a phial, with the words *lac Marie* underneath, a reference to the sacred milk of the virgin, of which Walsingham priory claimed to possess

⁷⁸⁴ Brumme, C., 'Aus nah und fern – Interpretation von Fundverbreitungsräumen am Beispiel der Pilgerzeichen aus Aachen und Köln' in Herbers, K. & Kühne, H., eds., *Pilgerzeichen – "Pilgerstrassen"*, (Tübingen, 2013), pp. 123-152, p. 140

⁷⁸⁵ Spencer, *Pilgrim Souvenirs*, p. 14

⁷⁸⁶ Cohen, E., 'In haec signa: Pilgrim-badge trade in southern France', *Journal of Medieval History* 2 (1976), pp. 193-214, p. 194

⁷⁸⁷ Spencer, *Badges from Norfolk*, pp. 10-14

a portion.⁷⁸⁸ A lead ampulla discovered in Attleborough in the spring of 2011 may also tentatively be identified as depicting this relic (see figures 54 and 55). It features a geometrical 'daisy wheel' design on one side and a monstrance shaped vessel flanked by two flasks on the other. The central vessel may, as is clearly the case in the above described badge, be representative of the virgin's milk. The two containers flanking it are more mysterious, but may be a reference to the two curative holy wells at Walsingham. Erasmus' account, which despite its highly satirical tone gives a very detailed description of the experience of a pilgrimage to Walsingham, clearly indicates that pilgrims arriving at the shrine were guided by custodians from one focal point to the next, where the attractions on offer would be explained and displayed. Erasmus implies that the milk of the virgin was displayed in a building housing the holy wells and may therefore have been considered part of a distinct focal point away from the Holy House. This ampulla may therefore be commemorating both the *lac Marie* and the wells. Yet another design commemorates a miracle which occurred at the priory and takes the form of a knight passing beneath an archway (see figure 52).⁷⁸⁹ Spencer gives a fairly specific date range between the 1320s and the 1330s to this badge, which, should the dating of the miracle in Blomefield's account to 1314 be correct, indicates the ability and willingness of the producers of such items to make or acquire new custom made moulds to satisfy shifts in demand and respond to new developments at the shrine. Perhaps the most enigmatic badge design associated with Walsingham can be seen on a limestone badge mould (see figures 56 and 57)⁷⁹⁰ discovered near the church of St. Mary at Little Walsingham (a similar mould is in the possession of King's Lynn Museum, part of the collection of pilgrim souvenirs amassed by Thomas Pung, see appendix 8 for image).⁷⁹¹ The obverse side of this

⁷⁸⁸ Erasmus gives a description of this relic in his account of a pilgrimage he made to Walsingham, he describes it as "inclosed in crystal [and]...dried up [like]...ground chalk, mixed with white of egg", Nichols, J. G., trans., *Pilgrimages to Saint Mary of Walsingham and Saint Thomas of Canterbury*, (London, 1849), pp. 22-23

⁷⁸⁹ The miracle this refers to occurred on the north side of the priory wall, where there was a very low and narrow doorway "not past an elne hye, and three quarters breadth. And a certain knight, Sir Raaf Boutetourt, armed cap and pee, and on horseback, being in days of old, 1314, perused by a cruel enemy, and in the utmost danger of being taken, made full speed for this gate, and invoking this Lady for his deliverance, he immediately found himself and his horse within the close and sanctuary of the priory, in safe asylum, and so fooled his enemy", Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 9, p. 276

⁷⁹⁰ Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery collection, see also Spencer, B., *Badges from Norfolk*, pp. 14-15

⁷⁹¹ The museum's records regarding this object are rather scant, but based on stylistic similarities it seems to be of a similar age to the Walsingham mould. Museum records also state that the mould was found in

mould features a row of five six-pointed stars with trefoils between each point, allowing multiple badges to be made during one casting. The reverse side features two versions of the same star design, this time bisected by a broad and prominent arrow. It is by no means clear what this design is meant to represent, although Blomefield writes that “the commonality...believed [that]...the Milky Way, was appointed by Providence to point out the particular place and residence of the Virgin”.⁷⁹² This attribution of the Milky Way as a guide to pilgrims is not unique to Walsingham, amongst German pilgrims it was known as the *Jakobsstrasse* (i.e. the road to Santiago)⁷⁹³ and Turkish hadji's knew it as the *hadjiler juli* (pilgrim's path). Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to assume that this particular design was inspired by the association between Walsingham and the Milky Way whereby the stars represent the Milky Way and the arrow symbolises its function as a way marker. Remarkably a badge cast from this mould has been recovered from the Thames foreshore (see figure 59).



Figures 52 and 53: Early 14th century badge commemorating the ‘Knight’s gate’ miracle at Walsingham; the knight in question can be seen passing through a small arch together with his horse (left) and half of a spherical openwork badge of the late 14th century, which contained cockle-shells.⁷⁹⁴

King’s Lynn, which would bring the known centres for production of Walsingham badges in Norfolk to three (see the discussion on badge production in Norwich below).

⁷⁹² Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 9, p. 280

⁷⁹³ Grimm, J., *Deutsche Mythologie*, (Göttingen, 1854), p. 331

⁷⁹⁴ Photographs by author, King’s Lynn Museum, at least eight different types of these open work ‘reliquary’ badges have been found in King’s Lynn and were in all likelihood sold at Walsingham. The cockle-shell may

1.3. Mechanics of production and distribution

The extraordinary variety and number, as well as their sometimes rather generic motifs suggests that badges produced at Walsingham, may not have been exclusively sold there. The Walsingham workshops may have been able to produce a surplus, and by keeping the decoration of these souvenirs (specifically ampullae) sufficiently non-specific, could have found other outlets for their wares, such as smaller Marian shrines in the region, which could not support their own badge industry, but may nevertheless have represented a lucrative side line for the producers of these items at Walsingham and elsewhere.



Figures 54 and 55: Pilgrim ampulla from Attleborough, obverse side with geometrical 'daisy wheel' design and reverse with a chalice or monstrance in the centre, flanked by two flasks⁷⁹⁵

The types of scallop shell ampulla depicted below (figures 60-62) could conceivably be sold at almost any shrine in western Europe. Although primarily an emblem of the Compostela pilgrimage, the scallop shell became an emblem of pilgrimage itself and such an ampulla could be marketed to a very wide audience.

simply have been a locally available substitute for the scallop shell more usually associated with medieval pilgrimage.

⁷⁹⁵ Photographs by author, Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery



Figures 56 and 57: Mould made from lithographic limestone from Solnhofen, Bavaria, 15th century⁷⁹⁶



Figures 58 and 59: lead ampulla featuring an arrow motif similar to that on the above mould (left) and badge cast from the obverse side design of the above mould and found at London (right)⁷⁹⁷

⁷⁹⁶ Ibid

⁷⁹⁷ Left image: Photograph by author, Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery, right image: Museum of London Collection, <http://collections.museumoflondon.org.uk/online/object/29163>, accessed on 03.05.16

These types of ampullae are ubiquitous within Museum collections, metal detector and chance finds,⁷⁹⁸ further supporting the theory that they were sold at numerous different locations and in huge numbers. In view of the costly and time consuming nature of transporting goods over any distance it seems most likely that production occurred as close to the shrines where the souvenirs were sold as possible and sale of surplus stock to other locations was a secondary and opportunistic side line. The existence of workshops functioning independently of specific shrine locations and supplying goods on demand to a range of shrines can, following a relatively recent find in Norwich, however no longer be discounted.



Figures 60,61 and 62: Scallop shell ampullae of various types⁷⁹⁹

During building works carried out at the site of Cinema City in Norwich a fourteenth century badge mould for the manufacture of badges showing the Annunciation (and almost certainly intended for sale at Walsingham) has been uncovered.⁸⁰⁰ Remarkably a badge made using this mould had been found near Tower Bridge in London in the late nineteenth century (see figure 63). On stylistic grounds it has been argued that the

⁷⁹⁸ See recorded finds from various Metal Detection societies in the region. A regional or national survey of finds of such ampullae may help to establish their spread and likely areas where they may have been produced and sold, see Dereham and district Metal Detecting Club, <http://ddmdc.bravesites.com/>, East Norfolk Metal Detecting Society, <http://enmds.weebly.com/finds-gallery.html>, Colchester Treasure hunting & Metal Detecting, <http://www.colchestertreasurehunting.co.uk/pilgrimsbadges.htm>, accessed on 04.05.16 and 05.05.16

⁷⁹⁹ Photographs by author, King's Lynn Museum and Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery

⁸⁰⁰ Ayers, B., 'Cities, Cogs and Commerce: Archaeological Approaches' in Bates, D. & Liddiard, R., eds., *East Anglia and its North Sea World in the Middle Ages*, (Woodbridge, 2013), pp. 63-81, p. 75

unknown Norwich artisan who had crafted this mould had also designed moulds for badges destined for sale at the shrine of Thomas Becket at Canterbury.⁸⁰¹ Moreover, a very similar badge from a different mould and adorned with the inscription 'Walsyngam' was found at St. Michael-at-Plea, Norwich,⁸⁰² not fifty metres from the find spot of the mould. Were it not for the discovery of the Badge at Tower Bridge, it could be argued that moulds were manufactured off site before being sent to various shrines, where the badges could be produced. This may often have been the case, since transport of one or even several moulds would be considerably less burdensome than that of possibly hundreds or thousands of badges. In this case the evidence for off site manufacture of this particular badge is incontrovertible. The size and exceptional level of detail of the Tower Bridge, as well as the St. Michael-at-Plea badge and the openwork production technique may point towards a different model of manufacture and distribution.



Figure 63: Fourteenth century lead alloy Annunciation badge, cast from mould found at Norwich⁸⁰³

The level of skill required to produce the moulds as well as the badges themselves is considerably higher, than in the case of the more generic and crude ampullae illustrated above. They can both be loosely defined as pilgrim souvenirs, but may in actuality have been as far removed from one another as a plastic Eiffel Tower is from a bottle of Moët & Chandon for the contemporary traveller seeking souvenirs. It seems likely that the

⁸⁰¹ Ibid

⁸⁰² Spencer, *Pilgrim Souvenirs*, p. 141

⁸⁰³ Museum of London collection, <http://www.museumoflondonprints.com/image/138953/unknown-lead-alloy-pilgrim-badge-14th-century>, accessed on 05.05.16

unknown mould maker working in the parish of St. Michael-at-Plea was operating at a rather specialised end of the pilgrim souvenir industry. His (or her) designs were complex and required specialist skills and because of the intricacy and level of detail of the finished product they could be sold at considerably higher prices than other souvenirs, thereby offsetting the costs and labour incurred in the transportation of these items to their ultimate destination. It may even be valid to regard this as evidence of a tertiary East Anglian pilgrim industry; higher skilled artisans producing intricate badges and moulds for the lower skilled hawkers who in their turn sold their wares to the visiting pilgrims (similar to the category of specialist pewter workers known as *miracliers* in medieval France⁸⁰⁴). This 'high skill-high value' model could also account for the fact that the above illustrated mould (figures 56 and 57) was fashioned from the high quality and expensive Solnhofen *Plattenkalk* rather than from cheaper, English limestone. Generic design and shrine independent workshops may also account for pilgrim badges attributed to less popular, smaller pilgrimage destinations. At such locations the infrastructure for mould-making, casting and transporting the constituent ingredients for the lead alloy would not have been sustainable, but an occasional purchase of ready made badges from an independent workshop for sale at the shrine's most popular feasts or at market days could neatly circumvent such problems.

1.4. Badges and ampullae from other East Anglian shrines

Besides the above mentioned badges sold at the shrine of Richard Caister and the many badges from Walsingham, East Anglian pilgrim souvenirs are also known from the shrine of St. Etheldreda at Ely (see appendix 8 for images). A number of badges depicting Christ's passion and related subjects have also been found. Spencer is somewhat reluctant to commit to a positive attribution of these badges, but three different designs all with a heart motif and two with flowers issuing from the top (see figures 63 and 65) are very suggestive of the late fifteenth century vellum souvenir from Bromholm contained in the Lewkenor family Book of Hours (see Bromholm).

⁸⁰⁴ Spencer, *Pilgrim souvenirs*, p. 7



Figures 64, 65 and 66: Two similar heart shaped pilgrim badges with flowers issuing from the top (left and right)⁸⁰⁵, detail of the pilgrim souvenir from Bromholm with a strikingly similar flower motif contained in a Book of Hours (centre)

Similarly a badge with a very prominent *titulus* instead of a second crossbar is reminiscent of the patriarchal cross representing the Bromholm relic (see appendix 8 for image). While the evidence for Bromholm badges from within East Anglia was merely suggestive at the time of Spencer's catalogue, more recent archaeological surveys at Bromholm have uncovered three badges with the face of Christ on the obverse side and the patriarchal cross on the reverse (figure 66). The River Thames assemblages have also yielded concrete attributions. A number of similar types of ampullae has been found, the majority depicting the distinctive patriarchal cross motif on one side and the crucified Christ on the other. One badge bears the inscription *AVE CRUX* in a band across the top. This badge is dateable by its archaeological context to about 1230x1260,⁸⁰⁶ within the first few decades of the establishment of the shrine of the Holy Rood and is one of the earliest pilgrim souvenirs from East Anglia yet found. In 1226 Henry III granted the priory the right to hold a fair on Holy Cross Day (14 September)⁸⁰⁷, making this undoubtedly one of the busiest days in the shrine's calendar. This badge, with its exaltation message across

⁸⁰⁵ Author photograph, Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery and King's Lynn Museum

⁸⁰⁶ Spencer, *Pilgrim souvenirs*, pp. 161-165

⁸⁰⁷ *Calendar of Close Rolls Henry III 1224-27*, (London, 1902), p. 105

the top, seems specifically designed for sale on that feast. Spencer also argues that the crucified Christ depicted on these ampullae can be tied to the papal indulgence granted to pilgrims who visited the shrine on Passion Sunday. This indulgence was however not issued until 1401, around a century and a half after the production of these souvenirs.



Figure 67: Assemblage found at Bromholm priory. Lead discs with the face of Christ on the obverse and the patriarchal cross on the reverse side.⁸⁰⁸

The multi-focal nature of popular pilgrim destinations is also borne out in the evidence of Bromholm souvenirs, with a badge depicting St. Andrew (the priory's patron) on one side and the patriarchal cross on the other.

1.5. Souvenirs from Europe

Apart from badges and ampullae associated with East Anglian shrines a number of souvenirs from shrines from outside the region and from continental Europe have also been recorded. Varnicles (badges commemorating the cloth with which St. Veronica wiped Christ's face on his way to Calvary and which subsequently bore his imprint, see figure 68) attest the importance and popularity of a pilgrimage to Rome. A very distinctive badge found in the Purfleet is in the form of three hosts bearing representations of the Suffering, Crucifixion and Ascension of Christ (figure 67). This commemorated the *Hostienwunder*, the miracle by which three hosts survived the fire that destroyed the church of St. Nicholas at Wilsnack, Germany and were found to be imbued with the blood

⁸⁰⁸ Author photograph, Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery

of Christ. Wilsnack very quickly developed into one of the most popular late medieval shrines in northern Europe.⁸⁰⁹ Badges and ampullae continue to be unearthed and will no doubt provide further evidence for the pilgrimages both within and outside of East Anglia.

The evidence extracted from these finds to date largely confirms textual sources:

Walsingham tokens reign supreme, both in terms of numbers and designs, with finds of badges and ampullae from all other East Anglian shrines combined not surpassing the numbers of Walsingham souvenirs. The archaeological evidence also confirms East Anglia's strong ties to the continent, with clear indicators of continued pilgrim activity to and from Europe. The unique value of this type of evidence is in fleshing out narratives of pilgrimage *loci* little documented in the textual evidence, such as the tomb of Richard Caister at Norwich, which appears to have been far more popular than suggested by the documentary evidence and in the insights into the manufacture and distribution of these souvenirs provided by the finds of moulds and the badges cast from them.

1.6. Deposition in water: certainty or fallacy?

Since the advent of this branch of historical and archaeological enquiry in the nineteenth century attempts have been made to explain the peculiarities in the distribution of find spots of these souvenirs. Large numbers of such badges have been found on the shore of the Thames in London, the Purfleet in King's Lynn, the Stour in Canterbury and the confluence of a number of medieval waterways in Salisbury.⁸¹⁰ Similar assemblages are also known from continental rivers such as the Seine, Somme, Loire, Saone, Scheldt, Meuse, Weser⁸¹¹ and the Rhonelle.⁸¹²

⁸⁰⁹ Wilsnack was also part of the itinerary of Margaret Kempe's last overseas pilgrimage: "In this way, through thick and thin, through the help of Our Lord, she was brought to Wilsnack and saw the precious blood", Windeatt, *Margery Kempe*, p. 279, see also Stolte, K., 'Vergängliche Wallfahrt: der Streit um das Wunderblut von Wilsnack im Spiegel päpstlicher Verlautbarungen, zugleich ein Beitrag zu Baugeschichte der Nikolaikirche', *Berichte und Forschungen aus dem Domstift Brandenburg*, Volume 1, (Brandenburg, 2008), pp. 5-64

⁸¹⁰ See Spencer, *Pilgrim Souvenirs*, p. 24, Spencer, *Badges from Norfolk*, p. 8, Garcia, M., 'Medieval Medicine, Magic and Water: The dilemma of deliberate deposition of pilgrim signs', *Peregrinations I* (2003), pp. 1-13, p. 4, Lee, J., 'Medieval pilgrims' badges in rivers: the curious history of a non-theory', *Journal of Art Historiography* 11 (2014), pp. 1-11, p. 5

⁸¹¹ Garcia, 'Medieval Medicine', p. 4

⁸¹² Herbers, K. & Kühne, H., 'Mittelalterliche Pilgerzeichen – Zur Geschichte und den gegenwärtigen Perspektiven ihrer Verforschung', in Herbers & Kühne, *Pilgerzeichen*, pp. 7-28, p. 19



Figures 68 and 69: Pilgrim badge commemorating the *Hostienwunder* from Wilsnack, Germany (right) and a Vernicle from Rome (left), both found in the Purfleet in King's Lynn⁸¹³

The largely accepted theory for the profusion of such finds in medieval waterways and especially in the vicinity of medieval towns and river crossings has hitherto been that pilgrims returning from their voyages had cast the tokens into the water as a propitiatory offering.⁸¹⁴ Deposition of artefacts in water has an established pedigree extending at least to the Bronze Age and is well attested from the Iron Age and the Roman period. While it cannot of course be described in terms of medieval Christian orthodoxy the prevalence of this behaviour across cultural, temporal and religious boundaries makes this an appealing and likely theory. Lee has recently challenged this prevailing view, labelling it a non-theory, borne out of a “possibility...repeated as a suggestion, then as an assertion, until it takes on the mantle of fact”.⁸¹⁵ Lee points towards the favourable conditions for the preservation of base metals within the relatively protective environment of the river mud versus the corrosive effects of oxidisation occurring in drier environments. This is undeniably true and it would be unwise to disregard the likelihood that a higher proportion of these tokens has survived in riverine contexts than elsewhere. Yet, the quantity of badges recovered from such archaeological contexts cannot be solely the result of environmental factors. Lee seeks to underpin this theory by pointing to the

⁸¹³ Author photograph, King's Lynn Museum

⁸¹⁴ Spencer, *Pilgrim Souvenirs*, p. 18

⁸¹⁵ Lee, *Medieval Pilgrims' badges in rivers*, p. 1

archaeological investigation of a site on Trig Lane in London and the context in which badges and ampullae were recovered there.⁸¹⁶ Finds of pilgrim souvenirs at Trig Lane were in the archaeological context of medieval revetment infill (consisting largely of rubbish, either in the form of organic waste or waste products from nearby trades, such as stone rubble and a quantity of earth, presumably from a nearby site). On the basis of this evidence Lee argues that such souvenirs, far from having served as votive offerings were simply cast away as rubbish, and indeed that medieval pilgrims were “discerning [and] image-savvy...[and] able to distinguish between different types of images with mutable and context-dependent significance” and therefore not prone to such ‘superstitious’ behaviour.⁸¹⁷ The assertion that something found in the context of medieval rubbish, especially in the case of revetment infill (which consists of everything to hand at the time of infilling and does not present a clear stratigraphic context, but rather a jumbled snapshot of the environs of the building project) is necessarily rubbish seems rather simplistic. Lee simply invokes Occam’s razor in her argument, without probing into alternative explanations. The possibility that some of these souvenirs were, for whatever reason, thought of as rubbish does not preclude the deposition of others as votive offerings. It is equally likely that their inclusion in the rubbish of these revetment infills is largely accidental. Accidental loss seems to be the most likely cause for the stray finds of such souvenirs away from riverine contexts. Equally they may have been included in the infill after being cast in the river, along with any and all other material in the vicinity. Such infill was designed to elevate the level behind the revetment sufficiently to allow building and other activity to take place and was carried out to accomplish this with the minimum of labour and cost involved. Rubbish was just one material ideally suited to this task, but as the Trig Lane excavations have shown other organic material, interspersed with finds, was also used. The easiest way to gather this material was from the area immediately surrounding the revetment under construction, i.e. mud, waste and whatever else to hand along the river. Inclusion of badges and ampullae within this seems likely, if a

⁸¹⁶ See Milne, G. & Milne, C., ‘Excavations on the Thames Waterfront at Trig Lane, London, 1974-76’, *Medieval Archaeology* 22 (1978), pp. 84-104, Spencer published an article concerning the most important finds from this excavation, but offers no suggestions as to the processes that led to their deposition on the site, see Spencer, B., ‘Pilgrim Souvenirs from the Medieval Waterfront Excavations at Trig Lane, London, 1974-76’, *Transactions of the London & Middlesex Archaeological Society* 33 (1982), pp. 304-323

⁸¹⁷ Lee, ‘Medieval Pilgrims’ badges in rivers’, p. 11

significant number of such tokens had indeed been cast into the river at a nearby location. It is therefore only to be expected for such finds to surface in these contexts and their presence does as much to buttress the idea of votive deposition as undermine it. Furthermore, Lee's suggestion that the 'image-savvy' nature of the medieval pilgrim precludes 'superstitious' attachment to these souvenirs seems equally binary and undifferentiated. There is no doubt that the medieval mind was finely attuned to the meaning of images and objects and that their context mattered a great deal, and it is precisely because of this ability for 'mutable and context-dependent' interpretation, that pilgrim souvenirs can be found serving in so many different capacities. Their use as reflectors and storage devices for thaumaturgical radiation is well attested, not least by the above cited example of the Aachen *spiegelzeichen*.⁸¹⁸ They were used in their capacity as contact relics to infuse water and wine, and turn these liquids into an internal or external medicine.⁸¹⁹ Their inclusion into the clay moulds for bells (so that a facsimile of the badge would appear on the surface of the bell after casting) is well attested in certain parts of Germany⁸²⁰ and is attributed by Spencer to apotropaic protection transmitted to all those in earshot.⁸²¹ They seemingly served every conceivable function ranging from tertiary relics, through to fashion accessories, status symbols, grave goods, family heirlooms and protection from diseases and other misfortunes. Lee's theory characterising these souvenirs largely as mass-produced throwaway items without any ritual or lingering thaumaturgical significance to their wearers does then not seem to be wholly sustainable. It raises valid and promising questions regarding the afterlife of such items, but until further evidence underpinning it comes to light, must at best be regarded as speculative.

⁸¹⁸ See Brumme, *Aus nah und fern* and Köster, K., 'Mittelalterliche Pilgerzeichen' in Kriss-Rettenbeck, L. & Möhler, G., eds., *Wallfahrt kennt keine Grenzen*, (Munich, 1984), pp. 203-23

⁸¹⁹ Ibid, pp. 208-10

⁸²⁰ See Hemmerle, B., 'Erhaltene mittelalterliche Glocken im Kreis Limburg-Weilburg' in *Jahrbuch für den Kreis Limburg-Weilburg*, (Limburg-an-der-Lahn, 2006), pp. 259-264, Three of the sixteen surviving medieval bells in the Limburg-Weilburg district (Hesse, Germany) show the inclusion of various pilgrim souvenirs in their outer surface. Kurt Köster has contributed most to this branch of pilgrim badge studies with his work on the bell founder Tilman von Hachenburg. See Köster, K., 'Meister Tilman von Hachenburg. Studien zum Werk eines mittelalterlichen Glockengießers des fünfzehnten Jahrhunderts. Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der als Glockenzier verwendeten mittelalterlichen Pilger- und Wallfahrtszeichen', *Jahrbuch der Hessischen Kirchengeschichtlichen Vereinigung* 8 (1957), pp. 1-206

⁸²¹ Spencer, *Pilgrim Souvenirs*, p. 19

1.7. Conclusions

Suggestions of ritual deposition outside of the above mentioned riverine contexts can be found in the continental European historiography on the subject,⁸²² but equally raise questions regarding similar practices in medieval East Anglia. The relatively even and seemingly random distribution of find spots of badges and ampullae in Norfolk may well have been produced by a mixture of accidental loss and ritual deposition in arable fields or livestock enclosures to ensure crop and animal health. The practice of using relics “for avoyding of wedes growing in corne”⁸²³ is mentioned in a letter by John Prise (Siôn ap Rhys) to Thomas Cromwell in connection with the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds. The usual difficulties in using an avowed reformers evidence to detail late medieval catholic practices obviously arise, but while these unorthodox superstitions are now doubt exaggerated the practices behind these claims are almost always based on historical realities, and it is a relatively small step from the use of primary and secondary relics for this purpose to the ritual deposition of these quasi-relics imbued with the power of the shrines they originated from. The work of Spencer in Britain and of Köster and Koldeweij on the continent has done much to increase knowledge and available data on these ubiquitous pilgrim souvenirs and in the process has shed light on many of the shrines they commemorate, but it is to be hoped that the increasing efficiency and availability of HER (Heritage Environment Record) and MODES (Museum Object Data Entry System) data systems may be used to establish a nationwide database of such objects and that increasing attention is paid to similar databases on the continent⁸²⁴ to further knowledge regarding the flow of pilgrims to and from mainland Europe.

⁸²² See Van Heurck, E. H., *Les drapelets de pèlerinage en Belgique et dans les pays voisins. Contribution à l'iconographie et à l'histoire des pèlerinages*, (Antwerp, 1922)

⁸²³ Wright, T., ed., *Three Chapters of Letters relating to the Suppression of Monasteries*, (London, 1843), p. 85, Prise also complains of the superstitious veneration at Bury St. Edmunds of a number of other spurious relics, such as the coals used to burn St. Lawrence, the nail clippings of St. Edmund and the penknife and boots of Thomas Becket.

⁸²⁴ See for example the *Zentrale Pilgerzeichenkartei* held in the *Glockenarchiv* in Nuremberg, Germany

Rood Screens

Despite the two great waves of iconoclasm to sweep East Anglia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, an astonishing number of rood screens (albeit often very badly damaged and degraded) has survived in the region. Taken as a whole they form the most substantial body of medieval paintings to be found in England. The vast majority of surviving screens date to the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries and can be associated with the schemes of re-building and alteration enacted in most of East Anglia's parish churches in this period. The customary division as regards to the responsibility for the upkeep of a parish church placed the parish priest in charge of the chancel, while the nave, and with it the rood screen dividing the two, belonged to the parish and had to be financed through donations, either in the form of individual donors, testators or the activities of parish guilds. Cotton has shown that testator bequests played a prominent role in the financing of the construction, repair and upkeep of screens; his survey of medieval wills from Norfolk has shown such bequests were made for 147 parish churches in the county,⁸²⁵ with the figure in Suffolk being 124.⁸²⁶ Although unambiguous evidence showing the degree of influence donors had on the subject matters depicted on the screens they were financing is hard to find,⁸²⁷ the inclusion of donor portraits, names and prayers for individuals on many panels seems to suggest that donors had clear affinities for certain saints and it can be asserted with a degree of certainty that the majority of saints depicted on East Anglian screens are there by virtue of the devotion of the individual donors to a specific saint or saints. These screens can therefore (although with obvious caveats) be treated as a snapshot of devotional patterns of late medieval East Anglian parishioners.

⁸²⁵ Cotton, S., 'Medieval rood screens in Norfolk – their construction and painting dates', *Norfolk Archaeology* 40 (1987), pp. 44-54

⁸²⁶ Duffy, E., *Saints, Sacrilege and Sedition: Religion and Conflict in the Tudor Reformation*, (London, 2012), p. 262

⁸²⁷ Most bequests were framed in more general terms, such as the will of Richard Foxe of Gateley of 1485, who gave 6s 8d for the "paynting [of] the Roodloft", Baker, A., *English Panel Paintings*, p. 221

2.1. Surviving evidence

Baker identified 117 churches throughout Norfolk and Suffolk that contained figurative screens.⁸²⁸ For the purposes of this discussion and the following analysis panels depicting Old Testament figures, apostles or fathers of the church have been omitted. This leaves 291 individual panels depicting 88 different saints.⁸²⁹ Of those saints 42 are only depicted once or twice within the corpus of surviving panels and can in the main be considered (even given the uneven geographic distribution of surviving panels and the restricted evidence base) as of limited popularity. A number of exceptions must however be made. St. Christopher only survives on two panels (Binham and Horsham St. Faith⁸³⁰) despite being undoubtedly one of the most popular saints in the late medieval period. The reason for his conspicuous absence may lie in the fact that most parish churches would have contained either a wall painting or a statue of St. Christopher. He was believed to ward off sudden death on the day his image could be glimpsed and many churches therefore had a painting of this saint on their north walls (to be seen on entering, see figure 70 below).⁸³¹ It was perhaps then felt that St. Christopher was duly honoured and depictions of him on rood screens were consequently rare and perhaps evidence of a special individual devotion. The other undeniably popular saint largely absent from rood screens of the region is St. Nicholas. Only one depiction of this saint survives, from the church of St. James at Pockthorpe, Norwich (since the conversion of this church into a puppet theatre, this screen has been housed in the modern church of St. Mary Magdalene, Norwich). His absence is less easy to explain; judging from the number of churches dedicated to him he appears marginally less popular in East Anglia (perhaps due to St. Edmund's rival patronage of seafarers), than in the rest of England, but they are still relatively

⁸²⁸ The figure given by Keyser in 1883 was 216 for Norfolk and Suffolk. It seems that almost half the surviving medieval East Anglian screens have been lost throughout the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. Keyser, C. E., *A list of buildings in Great Britain and Ireland having mural and other painted decorations, of dates prior to the latter part of the sixteenth century, with historical introduction and alphabetical index of subjects*, (London, 1883), pp. xviii-xx & xxiv-xxv

⁸²⁹ Figures derived from Baker, *English Panel Paintings*, pp. 231-8, Williamson, 'Saints on Norfolk Rood-Screens', Lillie, 'Screenwork in the County of Suffolk, Part III, Panels painted with Saints', Eve, *Saints and the painted rood-screens of north east Norfolk*

⁸³⁰ Baker, *English Panel Paintings*, p. 232

⁸³¹ Farmer, *Dictionary of Saints*, p. 105

numerous.⁸³² Working from such a restricted database it is of course entirely possible that undue significance is attached to this dearth of depictions, and that a larger than average number of St. Nicholas panels were destroyed or lost.



Figure 70: St. Christopher with Christ child, St. Edmund, Fritton, Norfolk⁸³³

2.2. Trends and patterns

Underlying this absence however, not just of St. Nicholas, but of a number of other seemingly popular male saints, is a statistically significant trend. Out of the 88 different saints shown on East Anglian screens 42% are female, yet overall female saints account for 56% of all depictions (see figures 70 and 71). This figure is all the more surprising given that judging from surviving medieval wills male testators outnumbered their female

⁸³² Twenty-nine churches in Norfolk are dedicated to St. Nicholas, making it the eighth most common dedication in this county. Linnell, *Church Dedications*, p. 6

⁸³³ Image used with the kind permission of John E. Vigor, Norfolk Churches Trust

counterparts four to one⁸³⁴ and it may be assumed that male donors were more likely to commission images of male saints. Were individual donors could be identified for whole screens or individual panels the ratio of male and female donors is similar; out of 164 named donors 71% were male.⁸³⁵

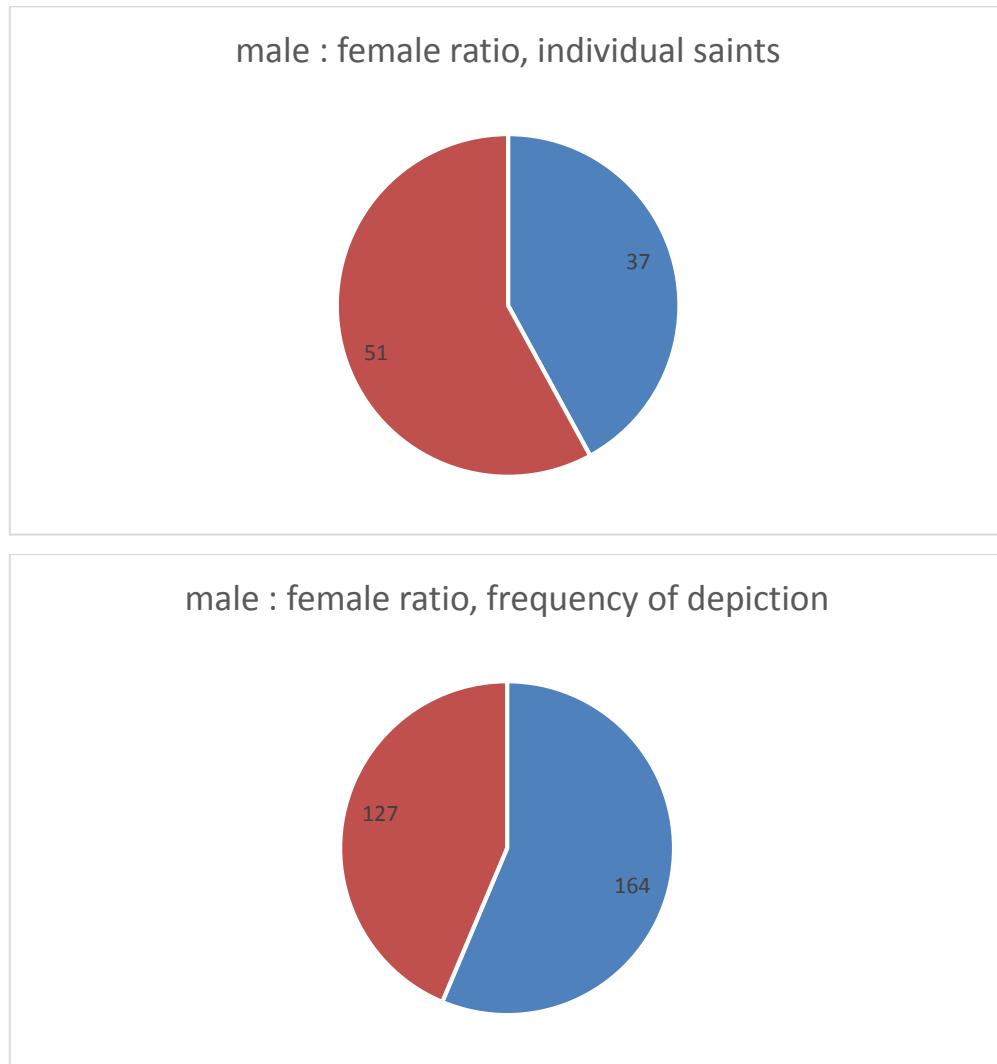


Figure 71 and 72: Statistically significant over-representation of female saints on East Anglian rood screens. Figure 71: Numbers of Individual saints, both male (red) and female (blue). Figure 72: Numbers of surviving panels depicting male (red) and female (blue) saints⁸³⁶

⁸³⁴ Figure derived from wills held at Suffolk Record Office. 74% of all wills studied were made by male testators during the period from 1346-1475; this figure rises to 80% for the period 1476-1520 and reaches its apogee in the period from 1520-1539 with 86% of all testators being male (sample size: 319). SRO HD 2448/1/1/255/1-3

⁸³⁵ Figure derived from Baker, *English Panel Paintings*, Appendix II, pp. 215-29

⁸³⁶Ibid, graph by author

It may be inferred then that the over-representation of female saints on screens is in fact driven by the male donors; put simply female saints may be seen as more efficacious or inspired greater devotion or (more likely) that a great deal of 'soft power' was being brought to bear on the male donors by their wives and that the selection of suitable saints for depiction was largely the responsibility of women. It is necessary to briefly consider the supposed merits and characteristics of the most frequently occurring saints on East Anglian rood screens to explain their popularity and the devotion they clearly inspired. Unsurprisingly St. Mary is the most commonly depicted saint with nineteen surviving panels. This of course merely confirms Mary's position at the head of the saints and the Queen of Heaven. Mary's role as representing an ideal of medieval, Christian womanhood has been discussed many times⁸³⁷ and needs no further explanation here. It is worth pointing out however, that an alternative role model in the form of depictions of Mary Magdalene survive from sixteen panels. Adhering to and confirming the pattern set by Mary as a suitable role model for depiction on screens is the obvious popularity of a number of virginal martyr saints. Panels depicting SS Apollonia, Barbara, Agnes, Dorothy, Cecilia, Ursula, Catherine of Alexandria and Margaret of Antioch account for 36% of the total of surviving panels.⁸³⁸ They all share the same characteristics as Mary in regards to their chastity, steadfastness and unwavering submission to God's will. It must however also be considered that their popularity may in part be due to their intercessionary powers. Dorothy was called upon for protection during childbirth, Barbara and Margaret of Antioch were said to protect those in danger of sudden death and Apollonia's association with toothache is made clear in her iconography (see figure 72). SS Catherine, Margaret and Barbara are also notably the only female members in the group of saints often invoked and depicted together in continental medieval art and known as the *Nothelfer* (Fourteen Holy Helpers).⁸³⁹ The veneration of these saints as a group, as was

⁸³⁷ See for example Rubin, M., *Mother of God, A History of the Virgin Mary*, (London, 2009)

⁸³⁸ Individual numbers of surviving panels are as follows: Barbara: 18, Agnes: 15, Dorothy: 14, Catherine of Alexandria: 13, Cecilia: 12, Apollonia: 12, Margaret of Antioch: 11 and Ursula: 11

⁸³⁹ The first instances of the veneration and accompanying iconography of the Fourteen Holy Helpers can be found in fourteenth century continental Europe, more specifically in the dioceses of Regensburg, Würzburg and Bamberg, for the development of this iconography and its geographical reach on the continent see Campana, L., *Die 14 Heiligen Nothelfer, Herkunft und Verehrung; Konkurrenz zur Medizin; Leben und Legenden; Reichweite und Bildnisse*, (Lauerz, 2008)

popular in certain regions of Bavaria and the Rhineland from the mid-fourteenth century does not however seem to have extended to East Anglia. Catherine, Margaret and Barbara between them account for 34 panels (12% off all panels), while the eleven male saints usually accompanying them (even allowing for regional variations on saints sometimes seen as one of the holy helpers and including SS Sixtus, Hubert, Nicholas and Roch to bring the total to fifteen) also account for 34 panels (ten of which show St. George and must therefore be viewed with regards to his special status in England in the late Middle Ages, rather than his position as a helper saint).



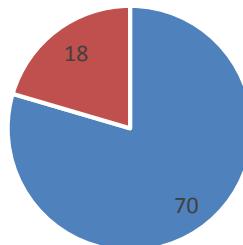
Figure 73: St. Apollonia holding a pair of pincers and a tooth, detail from rood screen at Barton Turf, Norfolk⁸⁴⁰

The emphasis in choosing saints for depiction on rood screen panels in East Anglia seems very much to have been on saints that could provide intercession in times of physical

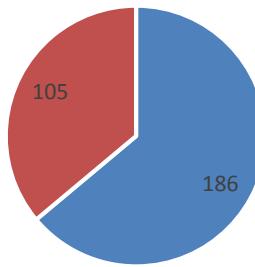
⁸⁴⁰ Picture used with the kind permission of Simon Knott, www.norfolkchurches.co.uk

need or in the extremity of death, with a further emphasis on female, virginal saints fulfilling this role. Other slight biases in terms of frequency of occurrence of certain saints can be determined. English Saints account for 18 (20 per cent) out of the total of 88. They however occur (or possibly have survived) more frequently than their universal counterparts, accounting for 36 per cent of all depictions (see figures 73 and 74). The same holds true for East Anglian saints. Depictions of seven saints from this region (including St. Felix) have survived (the others are SS Blida, Edmund, Etheldreda, Walstan, William and Withburgha), representing 8 per cent of the total.

universal saints : English saints ratio, individual saints



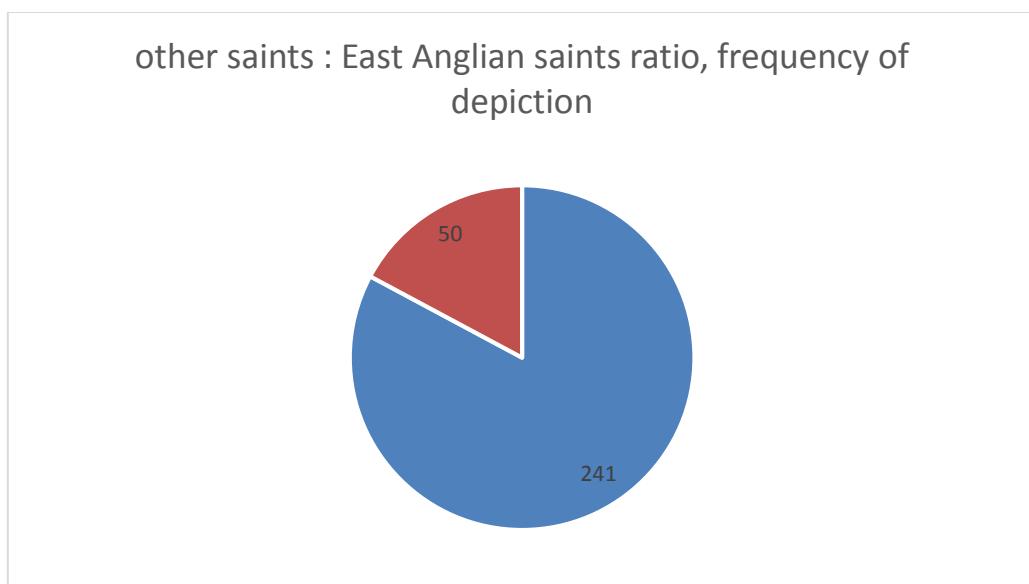
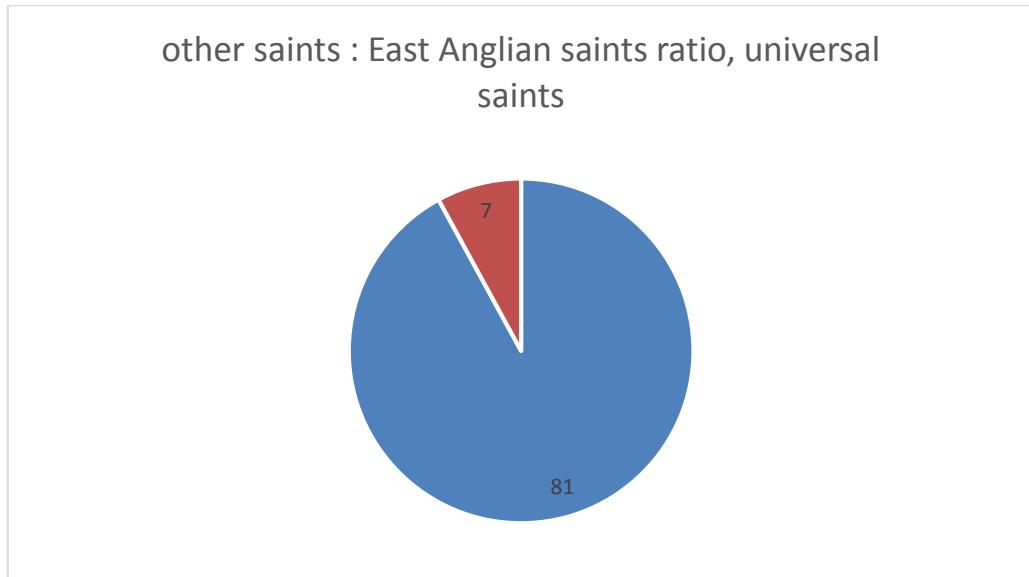
universal saints : English saints ratio, frequency of depiction



Figures 74 and 75: English saints and universal saints on East Anglian rood screens. Figure 74: total number of English saints (red) and Universal Saints (blue). Figure 75: Frequency of depiction of English saints (red) and universal saints (blue)⁸⁴¹

⁸⁴¹Graph by author from data in Baker, *English Panel Paintings*, Appendix II, pp. 215-29

Due to the total number of surviving screens showing these saints they do however account for 17 per cent of all panels (see below), with SS Edmund and Etheldreda being the most commonly recurring saints (Edmund is shown seventeen times and twelve panels survive depicting St. Etheldreda).



Figures 76 and 77: East Anglian Saints. Figure 76: number of East Anglian saints (red) compared to all other saints (blue). Figure 77: frequency of depiction of East Anglian saints (red) compared to all other saints (blue)⁸⁴²

⁸⁴² Ibid

2.3. Conclusions

Despite the relatively small evidential base and the potential for distortion of the figures through the vagaries of largely random survival and destruction a number of points regarding the devotional predilections of late medieval East Anglian parishioners can be made. Despite the relatively frequent occurrence of saints of a purely local or regional importance, such as Walstan and William, the more numerous depictions of nationally and internationally important saints from the region, like SS Edmund and Etheldreda and the possible over-representation of English saints in general, the picture that emerges is one of local parish churches fully integrated into the wider devotional patterns of late medieval Europe. Universal saints with an established pedigree of powers of intercession in times of dire physical or spiritual need were clearly deemed the most desirous for representation on rood screens. The significant bias in favour of female, and especially female virginal martyr saints, can partly be attributed to the need to portray an idealised version of womanhood alongside that of Mary (as well as the popularisation of their lives through the extraordinary success and popularity of the *Legenda aurea*), but may also be telling of the great influence the female laity of late medieval East Anglia had over the furnishing of devotional spaces and the shaping of patterns of prayer and devotion. The fact that with the exception of the Virgin Mary none of these female martyrs had a shrine of significant popularity or repute in the region can be seen as evidence of the more individualized and private expressions of devotion that emerged during the late medieval period, whereby the interplay between saint and supplicant could be conducted in the home using devotional aids, such as Books of Hours or within the local parish church at an altar, light or image of the saint (such as the above rood screen panels). The mediative role of monastic institutions in housing and facilitating controlled access to a shrine was thereby negated. It seems that monastic institutions keen to retain their role as shrine keepers (and with it the direct and indirect revenue accruing from the pilgrim trade) were only too aware of this and sought to counteract this effect by instituting new shrines more relevant to the newly developing devotional trends. The monks of Norwich Cathedral Priory attempted to promote nine new focal points for veneration in the cathedral between the middle of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century, among them saints which based on the evidence of surviving rood screen panels

were particularly popular (chiefly SS Sitha, Apollonia, Petronilla, Anne and Catherine of Alexandria). Judging by the failure of these new image shrines at Norwich it was not the saint alone that mattered, but the combination of the saint and the way in which he or she was venerated, i.e. within the local parish or the home. The evidence of these rood screens presents us with at least one reason why the more traditional forms of, and venues for pilgrimage, suffered the steep decline seen at numerous locations in the above case studies.

Holy Wells

Holy wells, along with other landscape features, such as the stones associated with St. Edmund at Lyng and Vanylven, are amongst the most difficult evidence to interpret. Early textual sources are almost never available, the folkloric evidence is impossible to date and the efforts of eighteenth and nineteenth century antiquarians have created a dense web of fanciful narratives obscuring the likely historical realities beneath. Attempts have been made, chiefly by individuals working in the fields of local history and folklore, to put the topic of holy wells on a more secure, evidence based footing.⁸⁴³ These efforts are occasionally marred by over-reliance on the antiquarian evidence and are in any case rarely focused on the use and existence of holy wells in the medieval period. Despite these difficulties in gathering evidence and evaluating historiographical arguments concerning this subject, holy wells and other water cures occur sufficiently frequently in the hagiographies of the saints and their shrines discussed above (see for example SS Edmund, Etheldreda and Walstan) that to ignore the topic entirely would be a grave omission. The following is intended briefly to summarise and present in a concise format both the evidence for holy wells that can be securely attested from the medieval period in connection with a pilgrimage site in East Anglia and the rather more difficult to evaluate evidence concerning supposed holy wells that are known only from post-medieval textual sources or landscape evidence. The first category is by far the smaller of the two, suggesting that hydrolatrous practices may have been of a somewhat lesser importance, than that assumed by eager antiquarians, but could also be interpreted as evidence for unease and unacceptance of such sites by the church institutions in whose vicinity they were located. Most likely it is simply a matter of lack of evidence; the bulk of the sources for shrines comes from obedientiary rolls, which (with the likely exception of Walsingham) were unlikely to contain reference to such wells, since the collection of offerings was clearly not commonly carried out there and wells, unlike the fabric of

⁸⁴³ See for example Rattue, *The Living Stream*, Harte, J., *English Holy Wells, a sourcebook*, three volumes, (Avebury, 2008), Source, *The Holy Wells Journal*, fifteen volumes, (1985-1998) and Manning, M, Taking the Waters in Norfolk, *Journal of the Norfolk Industrial Archaeology Society* V (1993), pp. 134-192

shrines, required very little in the way of constant restoration and beautification. The so-called 'Wishing Wells' at Walsingham are certainly the best documented examples of the use of wells as focal points for pilgrimage. A report of a miracle that occurred at these wells survives from the fifteenth century⁸⁴⁴ and Erasmus' account of the wells makes it clear that they were indeed part of the pilgrims' itinerary at Walsingham.⁸⁴⁵ The possible centrality of the wells in connection with the Marian shrine at Walsingham is set out above and need not be repeated here. Two wells connected with St. Walstan can be found both in the Latin and the English verse life of that saint.⁸⁴⁶ One of the miracles in the English verse life mentions water from the tomb of St. Walstan⁸⁴⁷ and two others specifically refer to the water of the well effecting the cures.⁸⁴⁸ Accepting the argument that the original text of the Latin life was composed in the thirteenth or earlier fourteenth century (see Bawburgh), a conservative *terminus a quo* for the incorporation of the wells into St. Walstan's cult can be given, although it is equally likely that the wells were already an established feature by this time. Healing wells were also connected with the cult of St. Edmund. Geoffrey of Wells' *De Infantia Sancti Eadmundi* mentions twelve such springs that burst forth on the spot of Edmund's first landing in his kingdom.⁸⁴⁹ Unlike with the 'Wishing Wells' of Walsingham and those connected to St. Walstan's cult, no physical

⁸⁴⁴ Dickinson, *Shrine of Our Lady*, pp. 12-13

⁸⁴⁵ "Before the chapel was a shed, which they say was suddenly, in the winter season, when everything was covered with snow, brought thither from a great distance. Under this shed are two wells, full to the brink; they say the spring is sacred to the holy Virgin. The water is wonderfully cold, and efficacious in curing the pains of the head and stomach", Nichols, *Pilgrimages to Saint Mary*, pp. 19-20

⁸⁴⁶ *Contigit etiam aliud miraculum, quod cum (in) quodam montis excelsi cacumine in dicta silva existenti boues cum sacro corpore sancti Walstani paululum persisterent, vena fontis contra naturam loci illius in signum gratie ob amorem sancti Walstani usque in hunc diem per divinam apparuit clementiam, ubi ante illa tempora nunquam aqua inuenta fuit. Declinantes autem poues ab illo loco cum illo precioso corpore versus villam de Bauburg, cum fere ad locum ubi nunc corpus iacet humatum prouenissent, aliam stationem in quodam loco fecerunt; in quo usque in diem hodiernum fontem alium, mire virtutis contra febres et multas alias infirmitates ob amorem sancti Walstani diuina pietas constituit*, James, 'Lives of St. Walstan', p. 248, "ȝ oxen upon ȝ hill tooke ȝ right way / toward ȝ lodge as fast as they may: / the one ox staled, a marvellous case: / there sprang a well by Gods grace. / To ȝ toun of Bawburgh they come soon, / through marsh & mire; as God would should be / ȝ other ox staled; a well sprang anon / next beyond ȝ Parsonage, as ȝ may see, / both man & beast doth great remedie" Ibid, p. 257

⁸⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 260

⁸⁴⁸ Ibid pp. 260-1

⁸⁴⁹ *Ubi etiam, ut ab oration surrexit, et equum ascendit, duodecim limpidissimi fonts de terra eupterunt, qui adhuc modern tempore non sine intuentium admiratione decurrunt, et delectabili ac festivo murmure jugiter defluentes in salum descendunt. Quorum aquis plurimi languidi abluti pristinae sanitati sunt restuti. Remotis etiam, pro infirmitate sive alia de causa ad potandum efficax sanitatis defertur aqua*, Arnold, *Memorials*, volume I, pp. 99-100

trace of the wells can now be found. The value of Geoffrey of Wells' account lies however not in pointing towards surviving landscape features, but in the concrete evidence it provides that wells were linked to miracles and saints in twelfth century East Anglia. Connections between an East Anglian saint and a curative well can possibly be found as early as the tenth century. A well of St. Etheldreda, which sprang up at the place of her original interment became a secondary site of devotion (see Ely) and although the *Liber Eliensis* in which this detail is recorded was compiled in the later twelfth century much of its source material may be contemporaneous with, or indeed even precede, the re-foundation of the monastery at Ely in 970. A similarly early record of a well can be found in the vita of St. Withburgha (dateable to the early twelfth century), which describes how 'a spring of bright water' emanated from her place of burial on the occasion of her translation. The record of both St. Etheldreda's and St. Withburgha's translations and the subsequent occurrence of springs at the spot their bodies had occupied are very similar and both narratives originate from the re-founded Benedictine monastery at Ely. It cannot now be determined whether one account inspired the other or whether both simply record earlier traditions regarding the translations of these saints (Bede is the first to record the translation of St. Etheldreda and the translation of St. Withburgha is included in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for the year 799 (798), neither of which include any mention of a well). The simple lack of a mention in these sources does not however rule out the possibility that devotion at these wells played a part in the cults of both saints from the mid-Anglo-Saxon period onwards. Aside from these relatively well documented holy wells a number of other sites equally are of incontrovertibly medieval origin, although much less is known about them. The hospital of St. Mary Magdalene in Beccles was founded (the exact year of the foundation is unknown, although a mid-fourteenth century date seems most likely) after a miracle cure from leprosy occurred at a spring there.⁸⁵⁰ A connection with a most likely Marian well cult can be found at the Augustinian priory of St. Mary at Flitcham with Appleton. From the early fourteenth century the priory was usually referred to as St. Mary *ad fontes*, St. Mary *de fontibus* or St. Mary at the Welle.⁸⁵¹

⁸⁵⁰ Page, *History of Suffolk*, Volume 2, p. 132

⁸⁵¹ Page, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 2, p. 380

A fons Sancti Botulfi is known to have existed in Weybourne in the thirteenth century.⁸⁵² The thirteenth century church of the priory of the Blessed Virgin and All Saints at Weybourne had incorporated into its fabric an earlier Anglo-Saxon church and it seems reasonable to assume that this earlier structure may have been dedicated to St. Botolph. Likely medieval holy wells can also be found at Hoxne⁸⁵³ (commemorating St. Edmund), at the Carmelite friary of St. Mary at Burnham Norton (Our Lady's well)⁸⁵⁴ and at Woolpit. Altogether the number of holy wells which can be categorised as of almost certain or very likely medieval origin does not exceed one dozen for the whole of East Anglia (see figure 78).

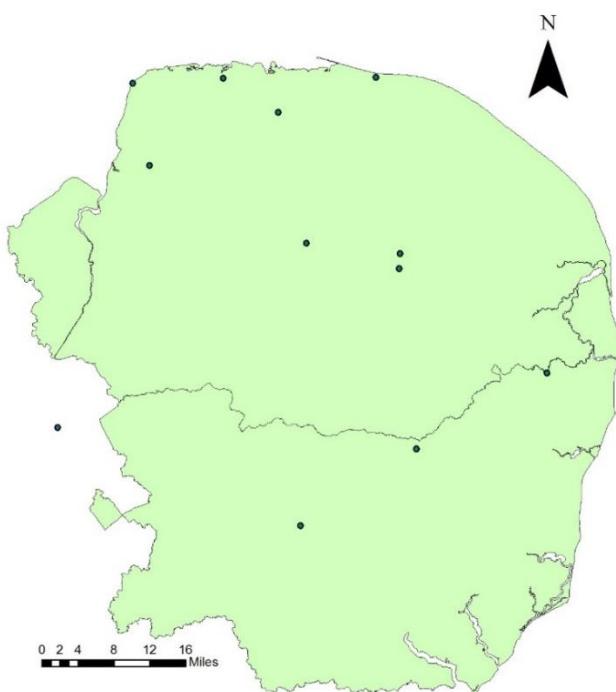


Figure 78: Locations of all East Anglian holy wells attested from the medieval or immediate post-medieval period (two of the locations are approximate: nothing remains of St. Etheldreda's well and the location given is that of the cathedral at Ely; the location of the supposed wells of St. Edmund at Hunstanton is based on the remains of St. Edmund's chapel there)⁸⁵⁵

⁸⁵² Harte, *English Holy Wells*, Volume 2, p. 276

⁸⁵³ Carey Evans, 'Contribution of Hoxne', p. 186

⁸⁵⁴ Norfolk Heritage Explorer, <http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/record-details?MNF1738>, accessed on 06.07.16

⁸⁵⁵ Map by author, data compiled from HER data, OS data and personal GPS data gathering

Hutton has pointed out this seeming dearth of holy wells in medieval East Anglia, which appears to have the lowest concentration of such sites anywhere in England. Hutton states that “about nine hundred” holy wells “attracted reverence in England throughout the Middle Ages”, Rattue gives details of 509 wells, of which the majority bear the dedication of a saint, and Harte reaches a count of 924 holy wells for the whole of England.⁸⁵⁶

These figures, and therefore the supposed paucity of holy wells in East Anglia, must however be scrutinised more closely. Harte’s database of 924 wells includes many whose first attestation comes in the post-medieval period (including many sites first recorded in the nineteenth century) and therefore has to be used with extreme caution; only 285 wells have textual evidence stretching back to the sixteenth century attached to them. A count of all wells in East Anglia possibly connected with medieval saints’ cults and pilgrimage, undertaken using the same criteria as Harte’s survey, reveals forty-eight supposed ‘holy wells’ (see figure 79).

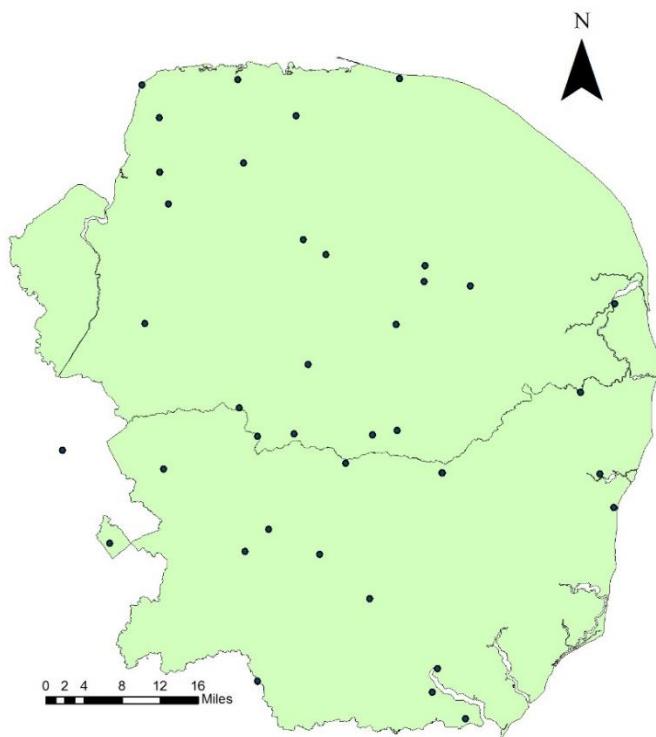


Figure 79: All sites of supposed ‘holy wells’ in East Anglia⁸⁵⁷

⁸⁵⁶ Hutton, R., *Pagan Britain*, (London, 2013), Rattue, *The Living Stream*, pp.173-9, Harte, *English Holy wells*, Analysis of sites, CD-Rom appendix

⁸⁵⁷ Map by author, data compiled from HER data, OS data and personal GPS data gathering

Admittedly this is still a relatively small figure given the size of the area and its comparatively dense settlement patterns during the medieval period, but the disparity in regards to well sites between East Anglia and the rest of England is certainly reduced. The argument ascribing the high density of such wells in parts of Wales and Cornwall to a corresponding survival and continuance of Celtic populations and their cultural traditions and the low density of wells in eastern areas to the influx of continental invaders and the resulting break with Celtic ritual behaviours was first seriously challenged by Rattue. He points towards the role geology and meteorology must play in a well-rounded appraisal of the distribution of holy wells. The areas covered by this survey record significantly lower annual rainfall than many western parts of England (Norfolk's Breckland receives just 600mm of annual rainfall,⁸⁵⁸ while the average for Cornwall is around 1000mm⁸⁵⁹) and the local sands and gravels contain fewer springs than most western and northern upland areas. To this partial rebuttal of the celtocentric model of well distribution can also be added the noteworthy divergence of agricultural practices in the post-medieval period in different areas of the country. An extensive series of enclosure acts and a focus on arable farming altered the landscape of East Anglia beyond all recognition in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The predominantly livestock oriented and therefore grass covered areas in the west and the northern uplands suffered far fewer changes, such as the ploughing out of medieval landscape features, than its eastern counterparts. The combination of geological, meteorological and agricultural factors is therefore far more likely to be of significance in the distribution of holy wells, than any notion of a Celtic predisposition for well worship. It seems certain that holy wells always were more scarce in the east, but this disparity has been accentuated only in the modern period by the use the East Anglian landscapes have predominantly been put to.

In addition to the relatively well attested sites above, a number of holy wells can be categorised as having a likely connection to pre-Reformation ritual practices. The well of St. Margaret at Wereham, the wells at Exning connected to the shadowy St. Mildred (or Mindred) and also to St. Etheldreda, the holy well at Bury St. Edmunds, the well of St.

⁸⁵⁸ <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/>, accessed on 06.07.16

⁸⁵⁹ <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/>, accessed on 06.07.16

James at Dunwich, the holy well at Erwarton, St. John's well at Great Barton, 'Pulcher's' well at Sudbury, Becket's well at Wymondham, a third well associated with St. Walstan at Taverham and the curiously named Mary Bone's well at Coxford all fall into this category.⁸⁶⁰ In no case is there conclusive evidence for the existence or the ritual use of these wells in the medieval period, but their first appearances in town rentals, early maps, land terriers and similar sources is sufficiently early to preclude the possibility of a fanciful nineteenth century identification.⁸⁶¹ Others, such as St. Helen's well at Santon near Thetford or All Saints well in Norwich, are almost certainly of medieval origin, but may owe their name to the nearby churches bearing the same dedication and may be described as holy wells by association, without ever necessarily having been esteemed a locus of devotional behaviour in their own right. Some are clearly of post medieval origin; the well said to be connected to St. Fursey in Burgh Castle was almost certainly a creation of the local priest in the late nineteenth century.⁸⁶²

It seems clear then that holy wells, and the miracle cures their waters could provide were a feature of East Anglian devotional behaviours from the conversion period up to the sixteenth century,⁸⁶³ but it seems equally certain that their importance as centres of

⁸⁶⁰ For details regarding their first mention see Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, Volume 7, p. 509 for Wereham, James, M. R., *Suffolk and Norfolk: A Perambulation of the two Counties with Notices of their History and their Ancient Buildings*, (Cambridge, 1930), p. 14 for Exning, Redstone, V. B., 'St. Edmund's Bury and Town Rental for 1295', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute for Archaeology & History* XIII (1908), pp. 191-222, p. 207 for Bury St. Edmunds, <https://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/Data/Sites/1/media/parish-histories/dunwich>, accessed on 07.07.16 for Dunwich, Scarfe, N., 'Excursion, 11 May 1976: Woolverstone, Erwarton and Shotley', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute for Archaeology & History* XXXIV (1977), p. 82 for Erwarton, <https://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/hbsmr-web/record.aspx?UID=MSF6877>, accessed on 07.07.16 for Great Barton, Hodson, W. W., 'S. Sepulchre's Chapel, Sudbury', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute for Archaeology & History* VII (1889), pp. 13-16, p. 15 for Sudbury, James, *Suffolk and Norfolk*, p. 137 for Wymondham, <http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/record-details?MNF12254>, accessed on 07.07.16 for Taverham and Whyte, N., *Inhabiting the Landscape: Place, Custom and Memory, 1500-1800*, (Oxford, 2009), no pagination for Coxford

⁸⁶¹ Nineteenth century writers, such as William Hone and Robert Hope, extrapolated and generalized from the undoubtedly ancient traditions of well-dressing ceremonies in certain parts of Derbyshire and popularized the idea of a superabundant occurrence of medieval, or even pre-Christian pagan holy wells in the English landscape. Much of what is written on the subject today still labours under this fundamentally flawed supposition and the discipline of holy well studies therefore is dominated with largely spurious arguments regarding the continuity of pagan wells into the Christian era and a general inflation of the importance of such sites in medieval England. See Hone, W., *The Every Day Book; or, the Guide to the Year*, Volume II (London, 1835), p. 638/9 & Hope, R., *The Legendary Lore of the Holy Wells of England*, (London, 1893)

⁸⁶² <http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/record-details?MNF10401>, accessed on 07.07.16

⁸⁶³ The cult centred around the well of St. Walstan near the church at Bawburgh did not seem to have ceased even after the Reformation. Reports of miracle cures persisted well into the twentieth century and may still be ongoing, see Twinch, *Saint Walstan*, pp. 50-4

pilgrimage and mass devotion has been grossly overestimated by nineteenth century writers (and has largely been propagated in their historiography since), drawing on the evidence provided by the isolated survivals of well-centred rituals in a small number of northern upland communities, a certain fascination with the “idolatrous excess”⁸⁶⁴ of popish religion and their own contemporary notions of the curative effects of ‘taking the waters’. Holy wells were present in East Anglia for the entire period covered by this survey. They may even have been the initial *locus sanctus* for pilgrimage in a number of instances. But they were never more than secondary or supplementary locations for more conventional shrines housed in churches and chapels. Not one case from the region can be found where a well was a stand-alone centre for pilgrimage attracting significant and sustained pilgrim traffic.

⁸⁶⁴ Hone, *Every Day Book*, p. 638

Conclusion

The scope of this thesis, both in terms of trying to draw a “thin line through a very long period of history”⁸⁶⁵ by tracing each shrine’s progress from its inception to its destruction, as well as by treating not one, but an entire region’s pilgrimage locations in this way, has inevitably created difficulties in its execution. The paradox of having to contend at the same time with too much and too little material to work with is the most vexing. Primary textual evidence, while certainly present in the form of monastic accounts, hagiographies, papal registers and the like is fragmentary and on the whole has been discussed and argued over many times before. Secondary evidence, given the geographic and temporal reach, is of course far too abundant to ever wholly digest within the bounds of this format. Repetition and omission must therefore account for the majority of this survey’s shortcomings. The uneven distribution of evidence is equally troubling; a number of the region’s greatest shrines (such as Walsingham and Bromholm) yield very little in the way of textual evidence and the whole of Suffolk is far less well represented both in terms of antiquarian sources, as well as more recent HER data than Norfolk. In short, it now seems obvious why a regional survey of pilgrimage in East Anglia has not previously been attempted. Nevertheless, a number of conclusions can certainly be drawn from the evidence that emerged.

To explain the impulses and motivations of medieval pilgrims and shrine custodians, which led to the creation, rise and decline of all the sites discussed in this text, it may be necessary to firstly attempt to define the nature of pilgrimage and the worship of saints. Arguably, such a definition might more suitably have been undertaken at the beginning of the present discussion, rather than at its end, but it is only after detailing the manifestations of these behaviours, that the reasons for them become in any way clear.

⁸⁶⁵ Sumption, *Pilgrimage*, p. 9

The origins of the first relic cults can with certainty be traced to the second century CE, but some may conceivably have existed even earlier than that.⁸⁶⁶ Their appearance in newly Christianized territories is always close to contemporaneous to the coming of Christianity itself. From the late antique onwards they are a central and non-negotiable part of Christian devotional practice. East Anglia is no exception in this matter. As seen above, the kin group centred around the East Anglian royal dynasty of the seventh century supplied many of the saints necessary to provide East Anglia with a variety of pilgrimage destinations. Yet, from their earliest manifestations, saints' cults were troubled by charges of heterodoxy and lingering paganism. Vigilantius, writing in southern Gaul in the early fifth century, denounced the cult of saints by means of worshipping relics in the strongest terms: "What need is there for you, with so much respect...to adore that - I know not what you call it- which you worship as you carry it in a little vessel? Why do you, in your adoration, kiss dust folded up in a linen cloth?"⁸⁶⁷ Soon after Augustine of Hippo articulated the orthodoxy regarding the veneration of relics: "It is to God that sacrifices are offered at their tombs...and the reason we pay such honours to their memory is, that by so doing we may both give thanks to the true God for their victories, and, by recalling them afresh...may stir ourselves up to imitate them....Therefore, whatever honours the religious may pay in the places of the martyrs, they are but honours rendered to their memory, not sacred rites or sacrifices offered to dead men as gods."⁸⁶⁸ For more than a millennium, from the fifth to the sixteenth century, orthodox church thinkers were at pains to point out this important distinction, which inescapably leads to the conclusion, that suspicions of idolatry, heterodoxy and syncretism or even paganism continued to be levelled at saints' cults and the worship of relics. Despite the undoubted centrality of the veneration of saints within medieval Christianity and the traditions of pilgrimage enshrined in it, it is important to remember that many of these cults where situated at

⁸⁶⁶ The first account of such a cult comes from the martyrdom of Polycarp in Smyrna in the middle of the second century CE: "Thus we, at last, took up his bones, more precious than precious stones, and finer than gold, and put them where it was meet. There the Lord will permit us to come together according to our power in gladness and joy, and celebrate the birthday of his martyrdom", Lake, K., trans., *The Apostolic Fathers*, Volume II, (London, 1919), p. 337

⁸⁶⁷ Vigilantius' words are recorded by Jerome in a letter denouncing the former, see Gilly, W. S., *Vigilantius and his Times*, (Thames Ditton, 1844), p. 395

⁸⁶⁸ Dods, M., ed., trans., *The Works of Aurelius Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, The City of God*, Volume I, (Edinburgh, 1871), p. 350

the borders of orthodoxy and when those borders shifted, were liable to find themselves stranded in enemy territory. The King's Lynn born medievalist, controversialist, and seeming anti-Catholic, George Coulton perceived medieval lay religion as but a thin veneer overlaying more ancient, pagan customs. His assertions that medieval peasants "paid homage to the old deities by their nightly fireside, or at the time-honoured sacred haunts, grove[s] or stone[s] or spring[s]"⁸⁶⁹ was by no means an isolated voice and Delumeau's *Le catholicisme entre Luther et Voltaire*⁸⁷⁰ brought this argument to its apex with claims that the 'true' conversion of the European laity was not achieved until the Reformation and subsequent Counter-Reformation. Such arguments pre-suppose a distinct duality in what their adherents commonly label 'elite' and 'popular' religion, with refined theological arguments, endlessly discussed orthodoxies and an unfeasibly complex web of canon law on the side of the elite and a muddle of pagan survivals, syncretic and heterodox practices and barely understood Christian rituals on the side of the lay population. Such a neat distinction seems virtually impossible and highly unlikely, and historians such as Aron Gurevich and, more recently, Carl Watkins have argued for its categorisation as an unhelpful and misleading construct.⁸⁷¹ The veneration of saints and their relics and images in particular resists such well-defined labels. The very notion of *loca sancta*, the places where a particular saint was, by virtue of his physical remains or some other personal significance, at its most potent, is not an inherently biblical idea. Arguments regarding the pagan nature of holy places can still be found in the writings of Eusebius of Caesarea in the early fourth century⁸⁷² and it is only from the middle of that century onwards, that a rapid multiplication of, and enthusiasm for, such *loca sancta* seems to have blossomed and become enshrined in church orthodoxy.⁸⁷³ These early addenda to Christian thought and practice were certainly well embedded by the time East Anglia was converted to Christianity and the first indigenous saints

⁸⁶⁹ Coulton, *Five Centuries of Religion*, Volume I, pp. 182-3

⁸⁷⁰ Delumeau, J., *Le catholicisme entre Luther et Voltaire*, (Paris, 1971)

⁸⁷¹ See Gurevich, A., *Medieval Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception*, (English translation, New York, 1988) and Watkins, C., "Folklore" and "Popular Religion" in Britain during the Middle Ages', *Folklore* 115 (2004), pp. 140-50

⁸⁷² Walker, P. W. L., *Holy City, Holy Places? Christian Attitudes to Jerusalem and the Holy Land in the Fourth Century*, (Oxford, 1990), p. 69

⁸⁷³ See Markus, R. A., 'How on earth could places become holy? Origins of the Christian idea of holy places', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2 (1994), pp. 257-71, see also Bartlett, R., *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?*, (Woodstock, 2013), pp. 7-13

established. Yet throughout the following millennium the merits of a number of these saints and relics was again and again questioned. From Anselm's doubts about "the quality of [the] sanctity"⁸⁷⁴ of the English saints, the detractors of St. Willam, who saw not a saint, but a "*puerulum pauperculum pannosum*",⁸⁷⁵ the doubt with which the Bromholm cross relic was treated at St. Alban's to Erasmus' withering remarks concerning the relics on display at Walsingham, the subject of doubt and disbelief is never far from the surface. Even disregarding the dual model of 'popular' and 'elite' religion, is it possible to explain the extraordinary longevity of certain shrines in this region through the 'gullibility' of the barely Christianized laity and to attribute their eventual downfall to an increasing adherence to 'rational', 'elite' and orthodox Christianity?

Such an approach seems to be seeking the answers in the wrong direction and to fundamentally misunderstand the motivations of medieval pilgrims. All arguments regarding veracity, orthodoxy and 'quality of sanctity' are largely beside the point in this context. What matters above all is efficacy. The questions asked of a saint's relics, or indeed a revered image, were unlikely to centre around their provenance and authenticity, but were far more likely to concern miracle working and protective properties. Medieval pilgrims' interests in the finer theological points and supposed merits of a saint must surely have paled in comparison to their interest in what cures or other miracles he, or she, could effect in their favour. To uncover the reasons for a shrine's appeal and its decline in popularity it is necessary to look towards how it was perceived in the eyes of the local population. Pilgrimage and other forms of intercessionary interventions are an inherently active devotional behaviour. The emphasis is not on an acceptance of God's will and a submission to it, but on attempts to influence it in the individual's favour. It allows for, and encourages, individual agency. Shrines can simply be seen as locations where such behaviours are likely to be most efficacious. It is of course important not to overstate the case for the curative reasons to undertake pilgrimages and entirely disregard other, subsidiary motivating factors, such as penitence, obtaining indulgences, a desire to see a newly constructed or beautified shrine or church,

⁸⁷⁴ Southern, R. W., ed., trans., *The life of St. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury by Eadmer*, (New York, 1962), p. 50

⁸⁷⁵ James & Jessop, *Thomas of Monmouth*, p. 85

an attempt to deny the parochial monopoly on spiritual welfare,⁸⁷⁶ sexual licentiousness or other behaviours frowned upon in the communal home environment, or the springtime longing that Chaucer evokes in his prologue to his *Canterbury Tales*. Nevertheless, the bulk of pilgrimage almost certainly was medicinal and curative in character.

The motivations of shrine custodians are also manifold; a successful and popular shrine enhanced the reputation of a monastic institution, not just amongst the laity, but also amongst monastics of other houses and orders. It increased the likelihood of attracting lucrative patronage and thereby bolstered the institution's temporal holdings, it brought in revenue in the form of offerings and on occasion also through the sale of wax (as was the custom at Ely) and other votive materials and pilgrim souvenirs. It could give rise, as happened at Bury St. Edmunds, to a sustained and distinctive literary output. Considering not just the institution housing the shrine, but also its environs, even more reasons to promote and nurture a shrine can be found. A whole secondary industry could depend on such a centre of pilgrimage: hawkers selling souvenirs to pilgrims, artisans who created the souvenirs, inn keepers who catered for travellers' need for sustenance and a place to sleep and many other, and often less savoury, trades could certainly be found around any reasonably popular shrine. This in turn created demand further afield, for raw materials, agricultural produce and labour. A shrine that was popular above the local, or even regional, level was therefore a complex, self-sustaining and often lucrative enterprise, in which a multitude of individuals had a stake, be it in the role of supplicants, custodians, or the lay populace that depended on its continued success for their living. Shrines had the potential to profoundly alter the landscape they occupied, both in a spiritual, as well as a physical sense.

These then are the base mechanics of pilgrimage: a desire for direct agency propelling individuals to undertake pilgrimages and a desire to perpetuate its popularity by all those who were invested in its success. This model of course does not take into account the multitude of political, spiritual, environmental and societal factors likely to affect the

⁸⁷⁶ See Sumption, *Pilgrimage*, pp. 12-13 for examples of individuals attempting to circumvent the strictures of the parish structure by undertaking pilgrimages

practice of pilgrimage as a whole or even just single shrines and it also does not encompass shrines operating on a locally restricted level. To uncover the patterns and trends at work in medieval East Anglia, it is necessary to look a little closer at conditions affecting, or even peculiar to, this region.

East Anglia's proximity to the continent and its concomitant attractiveness to continental settlers may be one such peculiarity. Anglo-Saxon settlement occurred early in the post-Roman period, and was likely of a relatively dense (inasmuch as early Anglo-Saxon settlement patterns can ever be described as dense) nature. After the kingdom's conversion to Christianity a large number of cults of apostle, founder and hermit saints therefore developed.⁸⁷⁷ The same attractiveness also led to successive waves of Viking incursions and the destruction of monastic communities and may have effectively erased the traces of many of these early saints' cults. Conversely a number of them owe their existence to precisely these incursions. The Anglo-Saxon map of shrines and pilgrimages in East Anglia was shaped as much by its geographical position, rich farmland and easily navigable rivers as by the predilections in their choice of saints by the early shrine custodians. The popularity and survival of these early cults was of course also affected with the coming of the Normans, although, as mentioned in the introduction, the extent of the likely 'purge' of native saints is by no means an uncontested subject.⁸⁷⁸

⁸⁷⁷ It is impossible to gauge the true number of indigenous saints of this period. Their number also depends on whether such a count includes missionary saints from Ireland and the continent, and on whether only saints attested from pre-Conquest sources are included. Casting the net rather wide (i.e. including all missionary saints and saints only known from later sources, the list (in alphabetical order) is as follows: Adulph, Aethelberht, Ana, Blythe, Botolph, Edmund, Felix, Foillan, Fursey (and possibly some of his 'brothers' and companions), Jurmin, Mindred, Suniman, Walstan, Withburgha and Wolfeius. Including saints from the Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire fenlands, who may have also been venerated in East Anglia (or attracted pilgrims from there) the following can be added: Aelfthryth, Arnulf, Bettelin, Cissa, Cynebrugh, Cyneswith, Eadnoth, Egbert, Erccongota, Ermenhilda, Ethelburgha, Etheldreda, Guthlac, Hedda (and companions), Herefrith, Hereswitha, Huna, Neot, Pandwyna, Pega, Saethryth, Sexburgha, Tancred, Tatwine, Tibba, Tondberth, Torthred, Tova, Wendreda and Wereburgha. The possibilities for duplications, scribal errors, later additions, false attributions and the like are almost endless, compared with actual textual or archaeological evidence for those saints. The basic premise of a great number of saints' cults developing in a short space of time in a relatively restricted geographical area following the conversion must not however be in doubt. See also Blair, J., 'A Saint for Every Minster, Local Cults in Anglo-Saxon England', in Thacker & Sharpe, *Local Saints*, pp. 455-494 for evidence of the abundance of Anglo-Saxon saints in pre-Conquest religious communities and Blair, J., 'A Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Saints', in Thacker & Sharpe, *Local Saints*, pp. 495-565 for their details.

⁸⁷⁸ It seems likely that many of these earliest saints had already fallen out of fashion and favour long before the Conquest and that the monastic reforms of the tenth century had as much of a role in their removal or non-renewal than the later Norman interventions

If the Anglo-Saxon conversion period may be termed a 'golden age' for saint making, then the three centuries following the Conquest may be granted the same appellation for pilgrimage in England. In the wider European context, the end of the barbarian raids of the ninth and tenth centuries, the opening of the overland route to Jerusalem at the end of the tenth and the decline of the Umayyad caliphate of Cordova during the same period and its withdrawal from northern Spanish affairs led to much easier access to the great shrines at Jerusalem and Santiago the Compostela, and combined with the post-millennial spiritual re-awakening noticeable all over Europe, this led to what Sumption called the 'great age of pilgrimage'.⁸⁷⁹

The construction of soaring cathedrals, thousands of solidly built stone parish churches and the establishment of large numbers of new monastic communities in England during the twelfth century laid the foundations for mass participation in pilgrimages closer to home. Where obedientiary accounts detailing shrine income survive, they almost invariably record the greatest income prior to the fifteenth century. The minutiae of the rise and fall of the individual shrines' popularity vary, at Norwich Cathedral income from offerings began to decline rapidly from the beginning of the third decade of the fourteenth century, while at Ely the peak did, atypically, not arrive until the turn of the fifteenth until declining to around a third of its previous levels a hundred years later. Similar trends can be seen outside of this region, with the shrine of Thomas Becket suffering a serious drop in income from the fourth decade of the fifteenth century and the marked fall in offerings to St. Hugh at Lincoln and Edward the Confessor at Westminster from the turn of the fifteenth. Less direct evidence, such as the hagiographical output of Bury St. Edmunds, seems to confirm this timeframe. The rise of Walsingham to one of the pre-eminent pilgrim shrines in England also occurred in the fourteenth century, although owing to the absence of income figures it is difficult to establish, whether Walsingham conformed to this trend and pilgrimage there declined in the late Middle Ages or enjoyed continued popularity until its suppression. The evidence concerning the success of monastic shrines, followed by a large scale collapse in their popularity, cannot be doubted. Extrapolating from this evidence to question the support and popularity enjoyed

⁸⁷⁹ Sumption, *Pilgrimage*, p. 115

by such monastic institutions as a whole necessarily leads to the conclusion that monasticism in late medieval England had entered into a period of decline and decay.⁸⁸⁰ Pilgrims were no longer willing to travel to shrines under the guardianship of a monastic institution, or simply saw their saints as no longer efficacious or superfluous to requirements. This included universal saints of undoubted popularity and appeal, such as St. Mary, whose cult was certainly increasing and gaining in dominance during the same period. It is not the saints then, but the guardians who must have been responsible for this reversal in fortunes.

It would of course be a gross oversimplification and a rather old fashioned adherence to the historical tradition of decrying the decadent outgrowths of popish religion, to lay all the blame for the decline of monastic shrines at the door of these institutions. Aside from the inherently passive act of abstaining from a pilgrimage to one of these 'traditional' shrines, there is also a noticeable trend towards pilgrimage to seemingly smaller and more locally popular image shrines, often housed in parish churches or chapels, rather than in cathedrals or other claustral churches. Such a trend may be at one with a general tendency towards more private and intimate forms of devotional behaviours, which can be witnessed through the increasing popularity of Books of Hours, devotional paintings for use in the home or the parish church,⁸⁸¹ other objects, such as the alabaster heads of John the Baptist manufactured in great numbers and rood screens with obvious personal links, such as donor portraits. Fifteenth and sixteenth century saints' lives and miracle accounts also confirm this trend. The new miracles in Lydgate's *Lives of SS Edmund and Fremund* are extraordinarily detailed; Lydgate takes pains to introduce the recipient and engage and emotionally invest the reader and build an emphatic bond. The same can be said for Robert Courzon's account of the miracle at Ipswich. Such narratives bear little resemblance to the terse enumerations of a saint's prowess often found in earlier *miracula* collections. The nature of the evidence does not allow the comparison of

⁸⁸⁰ See Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 4-5 & 190-200 for an alternative view on the vigour and popularity of late medieval catholic institutions and the potential of 'traditional' shrines to retain their appeal

⁸⁸¹ The so-called 'Ashwellthorpe Triptych' (Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery collection), commissioned by Christopher Knyvett, a member of a family of long established Norfolk gentry, is a particularly fine example of such devotional art. It is not known whether the piece was intended for display at his local church or his home, but in either case its use as an intensely personal object of devotion is not in doubt.

numbers of pilgrims between the 'new' parochial image shrines and the 'old' monastic shrines, but given the often isolated and sparse references for such shrines it seems likely that pilgrimage as a whole became less popular. This does not necessarily equate to a lessening of devotion to the saints, merely a trend towards more private forms of expressing such devotion and away from inherently public rituals, such as pilgrimage. Environmental factors may also be cited in the decline of pilgrimage. An individual's, a community's or indeed a society's response to unprecedented disasters is sufficiently complex to confound the most careful of scholars, but, to put it bluntly, England simply contained a great deal fewer people after the cataclysmic changes wrought by the agrarian crisis brought on by successive harvest failures and livestock disease in the first quarter of the fourteenth century and the devastating plague epidemic of the mid-fourteenth century. An attempt has been made above to conversely link these events with an increase in pilgrimage rather than its decline (see Ely), but this example can safely be categorised as atypical and there is little doubt that the overall effect was negative. The Black Death may also have wrought societal changes that led to a diminution of the practice of pilgrimage. The loosening of the ties binding the rural populace to their manorial lords and the concomitant reduction in labour services, led to increased freedoms both in terms of movement between manors and parishes, and in how to occupy lax periods in the agricultural year, i.e. immediately after crops were sown or harvested. Intuitively it could be assumed that such increased freedoms made pilgrimages, even long distance pilgrimages, easier to accomplish. By loosening the tight communal bounds and restrictions, the impetus to escape them at every possible opportunity may have been somewhat lessened. The Black Death certainly had an immediate and measurable effect on the East Anglian landscape, and with it, on the distribution of later pilgrimage shrines. The contraction of the population led to a contraction in land under arable or pastoral culture and a number of areas with hard to cultivate and less productive soils suffered partial abandonment. This effect was most notable in the sandy soils of the Norfolk and Suffolk Breckland, the Suffolk Sandlings and the areas of north Norfolk characterised by sandy, and easily leached soils, and a dearth of easily exploitable fresh water sources. The map of all known locations of pilgrimage in medieval East Anglia (p. 138) confirms this. These areas may have contained shrines, which suffered abandonment or simply fell out of favour, but during the late medieval

period, when the dominant form of newly established shrine was in the form of images in parish churches, none were created there, creating the map's lacunae.

This thesis has drawn attention to a number of the rarely studied minor pilgrimage locations within the region in the hope of providing a corrective to the outdated, and often incorrect, antiquarian evidence that has unaccountably been allowed to dominate debates on this topic for so long. In place of the still dominant, binary concept of a clear division occurring at the Reformation, which sees most shrines as more or less universally popular until the sixteenth century, this thesis seeks to highlight the evidence for a loss of support and popularity for many pilgrimage locations at a much earlier time. Also apparent from the evidence is a clear shift towards different locations, and different kinds of pilgrimage. It is clear that the concept of 'micro-pilgrimages',⁸⁸² newly beloved of modern clergy hoping to revive the fortunes of their dwindling congregations and crumbling edifices, has considerable relevance for later medieval pilgrimage studies, and presents a hitherto largely unexplored vein of enquiry. Local historians have of course often considered this topic, but it is clear that its inclusion into the wider narrative concerning later medieval pilgrimage is necessary. Equally important are considerations regarding the changing fortunes of individual sites. In the majority of the above detailed sites, the evidence points not toward sustained popularity and an even flow of pilgrims, until the abrupt cessation of pilgrimages and the suppression of shrines at the Reformation, but to something altogether more complex and varied. Many sites suffered a catastrophic, or sometimes more gradual, diminution in appeal far earlier than previously assumed, others can be shown to have had peaks and throughs in their popularity, while some seemingly retained their appeal, or even increased it up until the second quarter of the sixteenth century. This highlights the need to carefully consider individual sites, and the reasons behind the particular development of pilgrimage in that location, instead of attempting to discuss them as a largely homogenous whole. Blair's concept regarding the likely ubiquity of saints in the Anglo-Saxon period⁸⁸³ may also be applied in the context of late medieval pilgrimage to pose the question whether there

⁸⁸² Wigley, E., 'The Sunday morning journey to church considered as a form of 'micro-pilgrimage'', *Social & Cultural Geography* 17 (2016), pp. 694-713

⁸⁸³ Blair, *A Saint for every Minster?*, pp. 455-94

equally could have been a shrine for every parish. This has implications for the focus of new research. The bulk of medieval wills surviving from East Anglia has not been subjected to close scrutiny. Despite the fact that only a small minority contain pilgrimage bequests, such research would undoubtedly reveal new sites and new avenues of enquiry, as well as providing more evidence for some of the sites at present only represented by isolated references. Textual evidence of this kind will nevertheless be fragmentary and will pose more questions than it can answer. A far greater engagement with multi-disciplinary research is needed to reveal a more complete picture. This thesis has incorporated approaches and evidence from landscape studies and archaeology to fill some of the gaps. Serious difficulties were encountered in attempting to reconcile textual evidence with material of this kind, but the picture that emerged is nevertheless more nuanced, differentiated and likely closer to the historical realities, than any that could be gleaned from any other approach. Another connected issue, namely the secondary and tertiary industries and occupations which developed alongside of, and depended on pilgrimage sites, has also been explored. Further research in this area may uncover many of the oblique processes by which shrines have altered the landscape, settlement patterns and demographics of their surrounding communities. A further corrective element of the thesis has been supplied in the discussion on holy wells. More than any other feature connected with pilgrimage, holy wells have up to now been consigned to the margins of research, to be more suitably undertaken by local history groups, neo-pagan seekers or retired ramblers. The evidence has shown that holy wells, at least in the East Anglian context, were never the primary focus of a pilgrimage, and must be understood in the context of supporting features of an already established site. The evidence for hydrolatrous practices is nevertheless sufficient to merit serious consideration and focused research away from the real or imagined taint of dilettantism.

The image of pilgrimage in medieval East Anglia that emerges is complex. The practice endured from the seventh to the sixteenth century (and is once again on the increase), so any attempt to discuss it as a single, even vaguely homogenous phenomenon, is doomed to failure. Presenting the evidence in the convenient and artificial bounds of distinct eras, while beloved of historians, allows for some way markers, but is equally unsatisfying. The 'thin line' at least allows us to follow the many developments and manifestations of this

practice, while keeping the horizon firmly in sight. To what degree East Anglia is possessed of a quantifiable regional character in terms of its shrines and pilgrimages can only finally be determined by regional studies of other parts of England⁸⁸⁴ and further gathering of evidence within this region. It is hoped that a greater number of such regional surveys and gazetteers could bring clarity to the regional differences, and similarities, of medieval England and its position in the wider, European context. East Anglia's shifting geopolitical situation and its close contacts with a wider North Sea world, certainly creates an impression of a region that is part of England, but not wholly of it. The clear continental influences, and interplay between the defiantly local and the outward looking and acquisitive, that can be seen in the East Anglian landscape, its farming practices, art and architecture have certainly led to the development of a distinct distribution of holy sites and pilgrimage routes.

⁸⁸⁴ To date only in the south-west, and in particular Cornwall, has such a survey been attempted. See for example, Orme, *Saints of Cornwall*.

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Appendix 1: Members of the East Anglian royal kin group of the seventh century posthumously venerated as saints

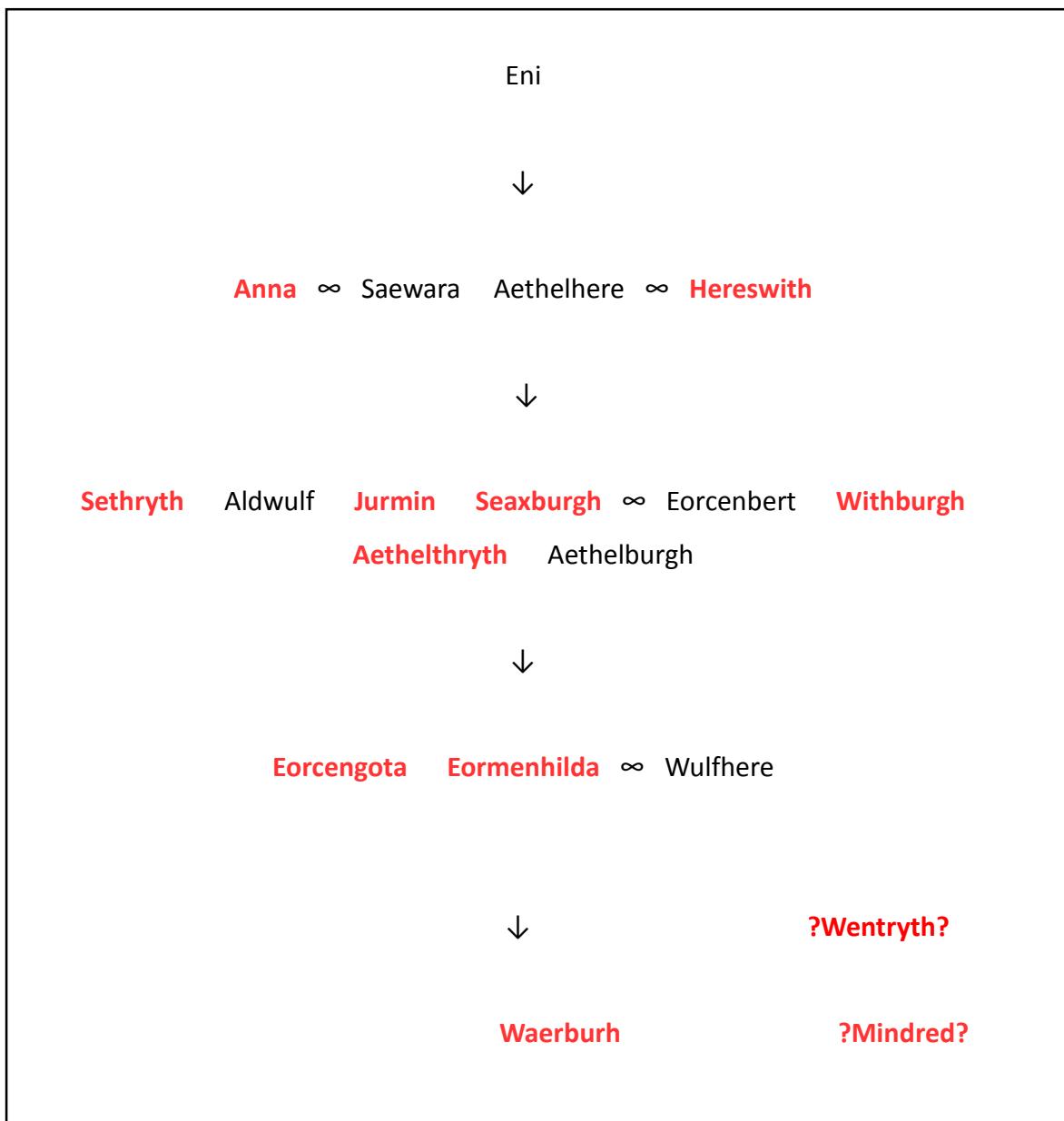


Figure 1.1: A number of the attributions are somewhat problematic. Hereswith is sometimes referred to as the second wife of Anna, but was in all probability the wife of his younger brother Aethelhere;⁸⁸⁵ she retired to the nunnery of Chelles after her husband's death. St. Sethrytha was a stepdaughter of Anna and was, according to Bede sent to the

⁸⁸⁵ <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07256a.htm>, accessed on 04.09. 14

monastery of Brie in Frankia where she became abbess.⁸⁸⁶ Aethelburh, one of Anna's own daughters also went to Brie and equally became an abbess there.⁸⁸⁷ St. Aetheltryth, also known as Aetheldreda and later Audrey was the first abbess of Ely. St. Withburh, supposedly Anna's youngest daughter was, according to her *vita*, the founder of a monastic community at Dereham.⁸⁸⁸ SS Seaxburh, Eormenhilda and Waerburh succeeded St. Aetheldreda as abbesses of Ely.⁸⁸⁹ St. Eorcengota, like her mother went to the monastery at Brie. St. Wentryth is the most elusive member of this kin group. The church in March in Cambridgeshire bears her dedication (St. Wendreda) and her relics were briefly in possession of Ely before being given to Canterbury by King Cnut.⁸⁹⁰ Many of the narratives dealing with the supposed familial relations of this kin group originated in the re-founded Benedictine monastery at Ely and a desire to create order out of a number of relics of perhaps already half forgotten Anglo-Saxon saints in its possession as well as a desire to lay claim to the inheritance (in the context of power, venerability and continuity) of the old royal line of the kingdom of East Anglia.

⁸⁸⁶ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, p.122

⁸⁸⁷ Ibid

⁸⁸⁸ Love, *Goscelin*, p. 57

⁸⁸⁹ Fairweather, *Liber Eliensis*, pp. 46-70

⁸⁹⁰ Ibid 4, pp. 172-175, Jones, T., *The English Saints, East Anglia*, (Norwich, 1999), pp. 104-5

Appendix 2: Royal visits to Walsingham 1216-1538

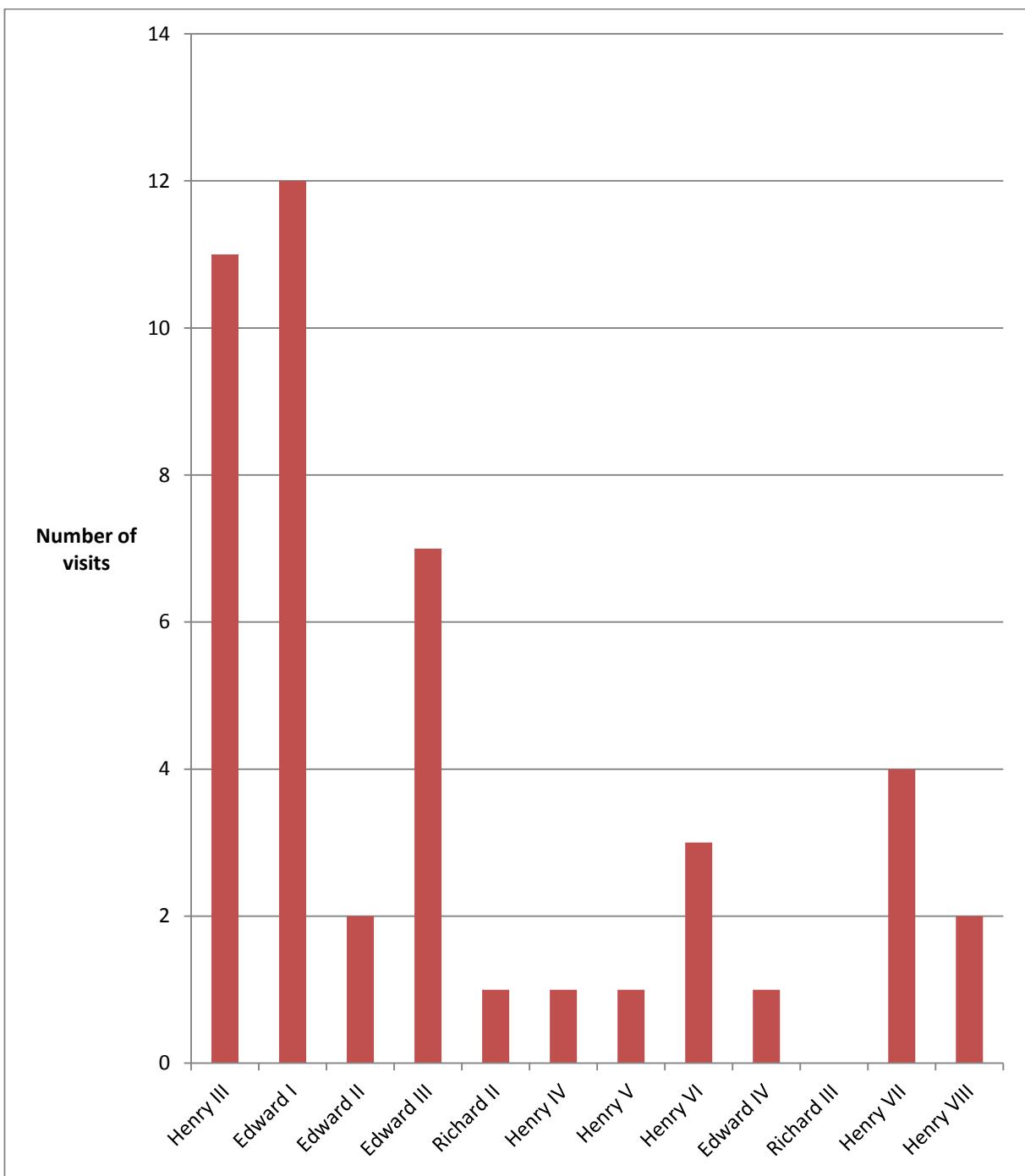


Figure 2.1: Royal visits to Walsingham

Henry III: 1226, 1229, 1232, 1235, 1238, 1242, 1245, 1248, 1251, 1256, 1272⁸⁹¹
Edward I: 1276, 1281, 1289, 1292, 1294, 1295, 1297, 1298, 1299, 1300, 1302, 1305⁸⁹²
Edward II: 1315, 1326⁸⁹³
Edward III: 1328, 1331, 1333, 1334, 1335, 1336, 1343⁸⁹⁴
Richard II: 1383⁸⁹⁵
Henry IV: 1406⁸⁹⁶
Henry V: 1421⁸⁹⁷
Henry VI: 1447, 1448, 1449⁸⁹⁸
Edward IV: 1469⁸⁹⁹
Richard III: none
Henry VII: 1487, 1489⁹⁰⁰, 1498⁹⁰¹, 1506⁹⁰² (there is also a distinct possibility that Henry VII visited Walsingham in 1491 when he can be found in Colchester on 22nd of July and in Norwich on the 28th, with the six days in between unaccounted for. His pattern of movement in the years 1487 and 1498 suggests that he may have visited Walsingham during this period)⁹⁰³
Henry VIII: 1509?⁹⁰⁴, 1511⁹⁰⁵

⁸⁹¹ Dickinson, *The Shrine of Our Lady*, pp. 19-20

⁸⁹² Gough, H., *Itinerary of King Edward the First throughout his reign, AD 1272-1307*, 2 vols, (London 1900), p. 16-174 (Vol.1), pp. 17-275 (Vol.2)

⁸⁹³ Dickinson, *The Shrine of Our Lady*, p. 24

⁸⁹⁴ Ormrod, W.M., *Edward III*, (New Haven, 2012), pp.610-631

⁸⁹⁵ 'De mense Maii parte et Junii peregrinabantur rex et regina usque dominam de Walsyngham', Lumby, J.R. ed., *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden Monachi Cestrensis*, (London, 1886) p. 20

⁸⁹⁶ Wylie, J.H., *History of England under Henry the Fourth*, 4 vols, Volume IV, (London, 1898), p. 295, see also Mortimer, I., *The Fears of Henry IV, The Life of England's Self-Made King*, (London, 2007), p. 377

⁸⁹⁷ Wylie, J.H. & Waugh, W.T., *The Reign of Henry the Fifth*, 3 vols, Volume III, (Cambridge, 1929), p. 272

⁸⁹⁸ Christie, M.E., *Henry VI*, (Boston, 1922), pp.375-389

⁸⁹⁹ Kleineke, H., *Edward IV*, (Abingdon, 2009), p. 218

⁹⁰⁰ Gairdner, *Paston Letters*, p. 121 (Vol 6)

⁹⁰¹ Bentley, S. ed., *Excerpta historica: or, Illustrations of English history*, (London, 1831), p. 119

⁹⁰² Blach, W.H., *A descriptive, analytical, and critical Catalogue of the Manuscripts bequeathed unto the University of Oxford by Elias Ashmole*, MS 1113, (Oxford, 1845), p. 790: "Account of the King's visit to Cambridge, on his 'pilgremage towards our Lady of Walsingham' after keeping easter at Greenwich, in 1506."

⁹⁰³ Temperley, G., *Henry VII*, (London, 1917), pp. 410-419

⁹⁰⁴ Spelman records a pilgrimage of Henry VIII to Walsingham, but does not give a date: "Obtinuit fama celebris me adhuc pueru, Regem Angliae Henricum VIII nudis pedibus a Bashamia ad praesentiam Virginis perrexisse, conceptisque votis monile peringentis pretii obtulisse", Spelman, H., *The English works of Sir Henry Spelman published in his life-time: together with his Posthumous works*, (London, 1727), p. 149

⁹⁰⁵ Edward Hall reports that "shortly after, and before the Quenes churchinge, the kynge rode to Walsingham", Hall, E., *Hall's Chronicle*, (London, 1809), p. 517

Appendix 3: St. William



Figure 3.1: Locations of surviving rood screens of St. William of Norwich, the identification of the saint on a panel from St. James, Pockthorpe (black and white picture) as St. William is uncertain. James and Jessop included this panel in their list of surviving depictions of William (but missed the Litcham panel), whereas Baker does not believe this panel to show William⁹⁰⁶

⁹⁰⁶ James & Jessop, *Thomas of Monmouth*, p. viii, Baker, *English Panel Paintings*, p. 170

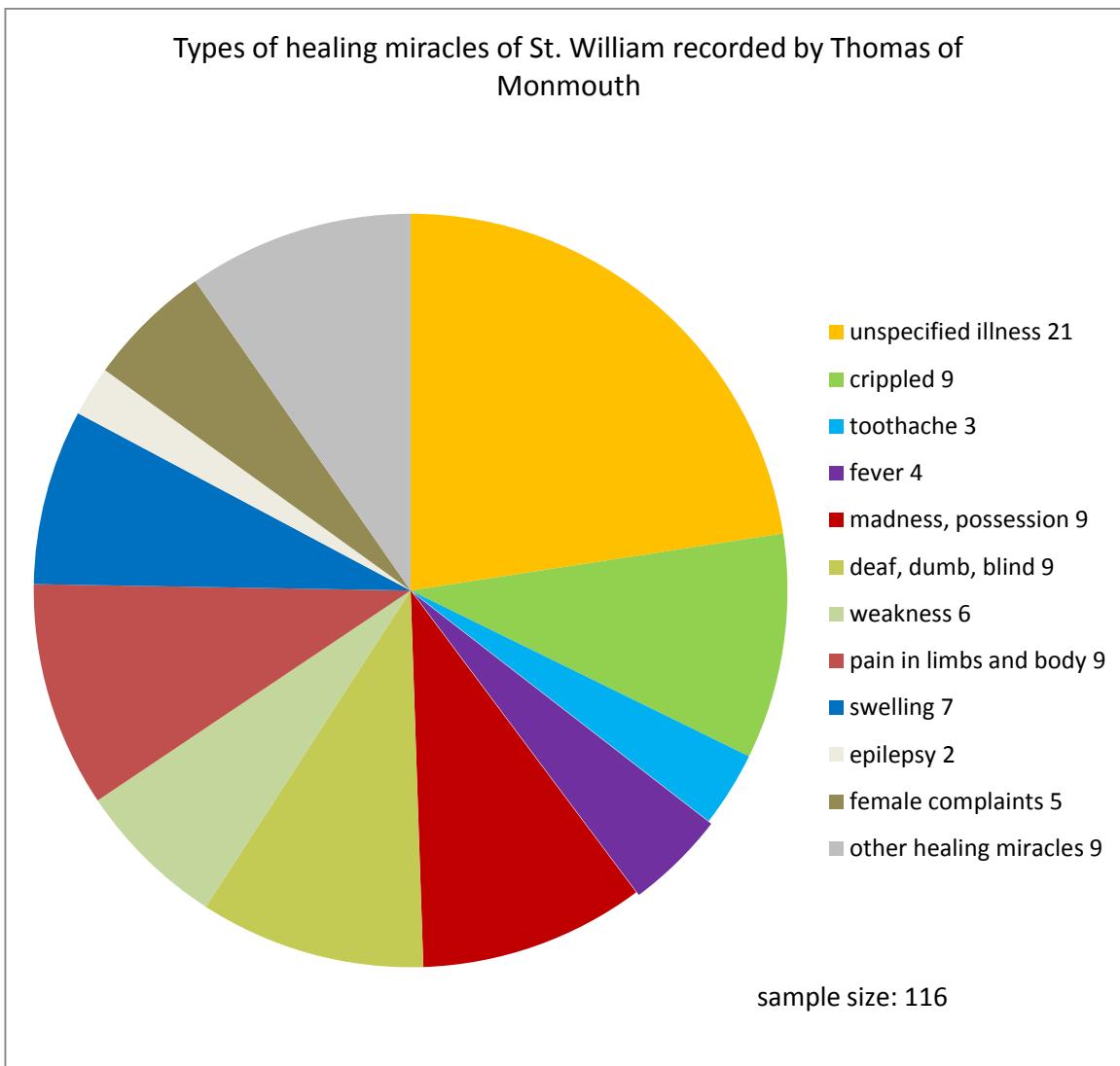


Figure 3.2: Detailed breakdown of the physical ailments healed or eased by the intercession of St. William according to the miracles described by Thomas of Monmouth⁹⁰⁷

⁹⁰⁷ Graph by author, data from James & Jessop, *Thomas of Monmouth*, pp. 1-294

Appendix 4: Saints on East Anglian rood screens

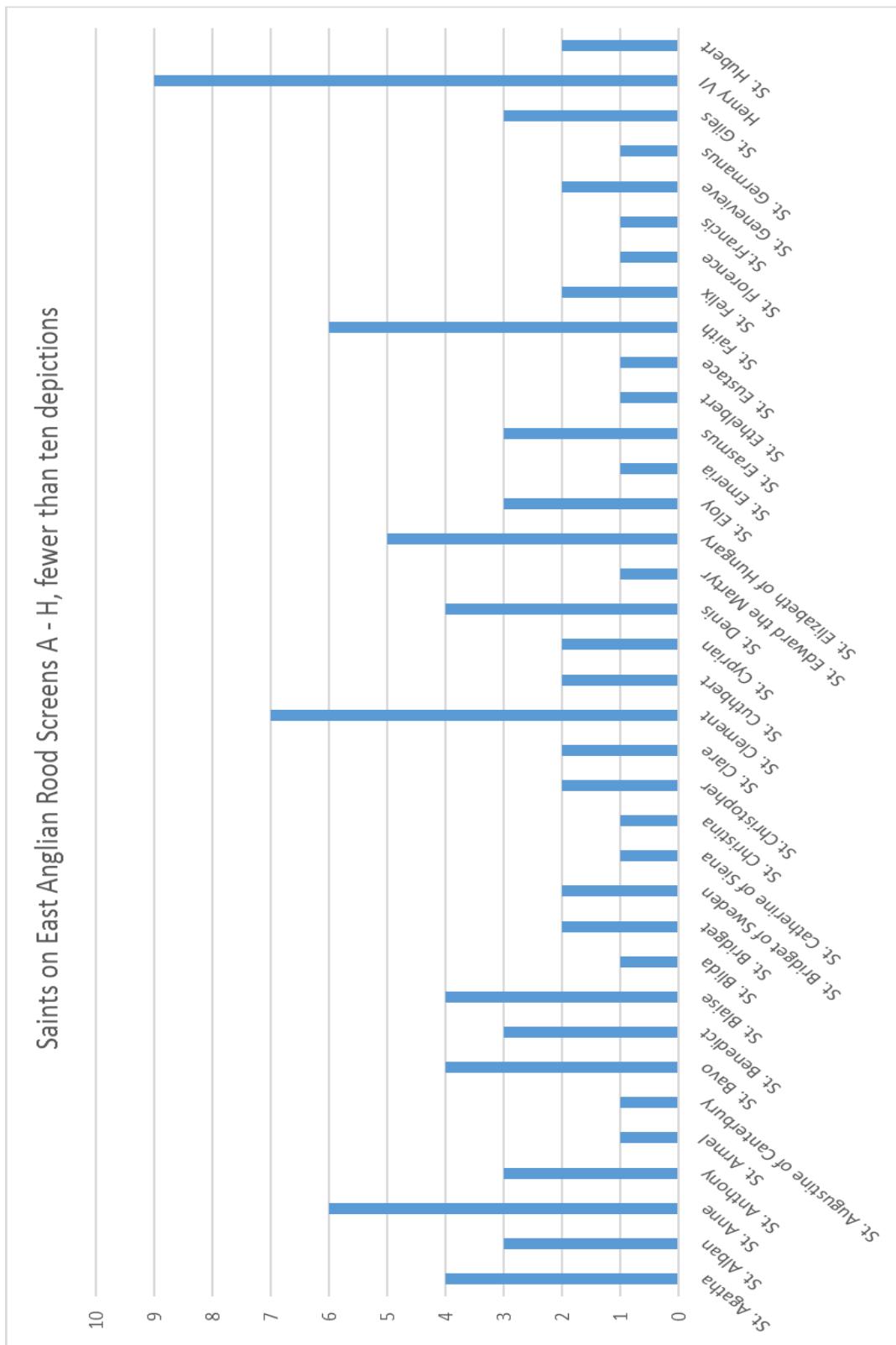


Figure 4.1: Saints on East Anglian rood screens A-H, with fewer than ten surviving depictions

Saints on East Anglian Rood Screens, J - W, fewer than ten depictions

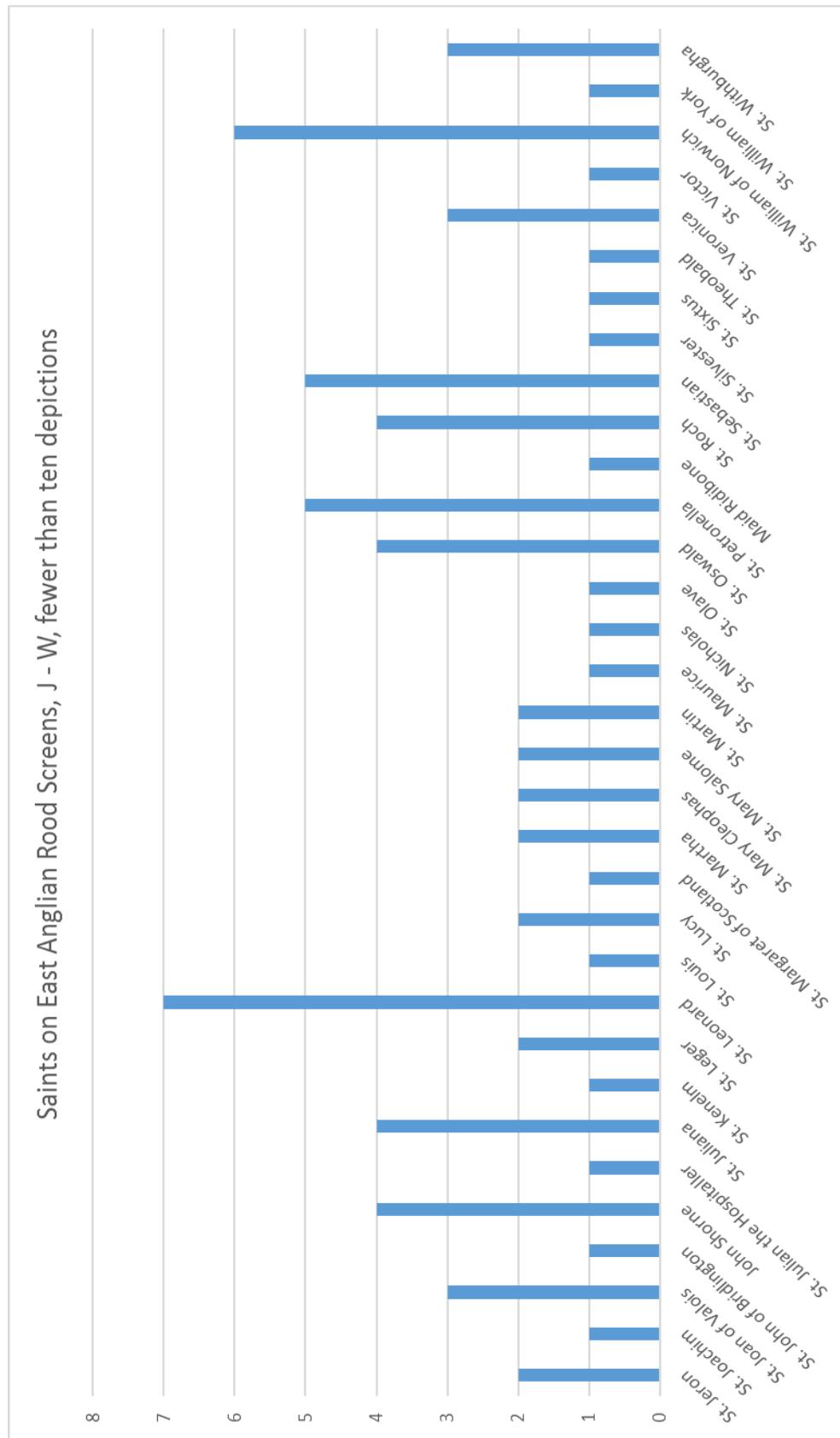


Figure 4.2: Saints on East Anglian rood screens J-W, with fewer than ten surviving depictions

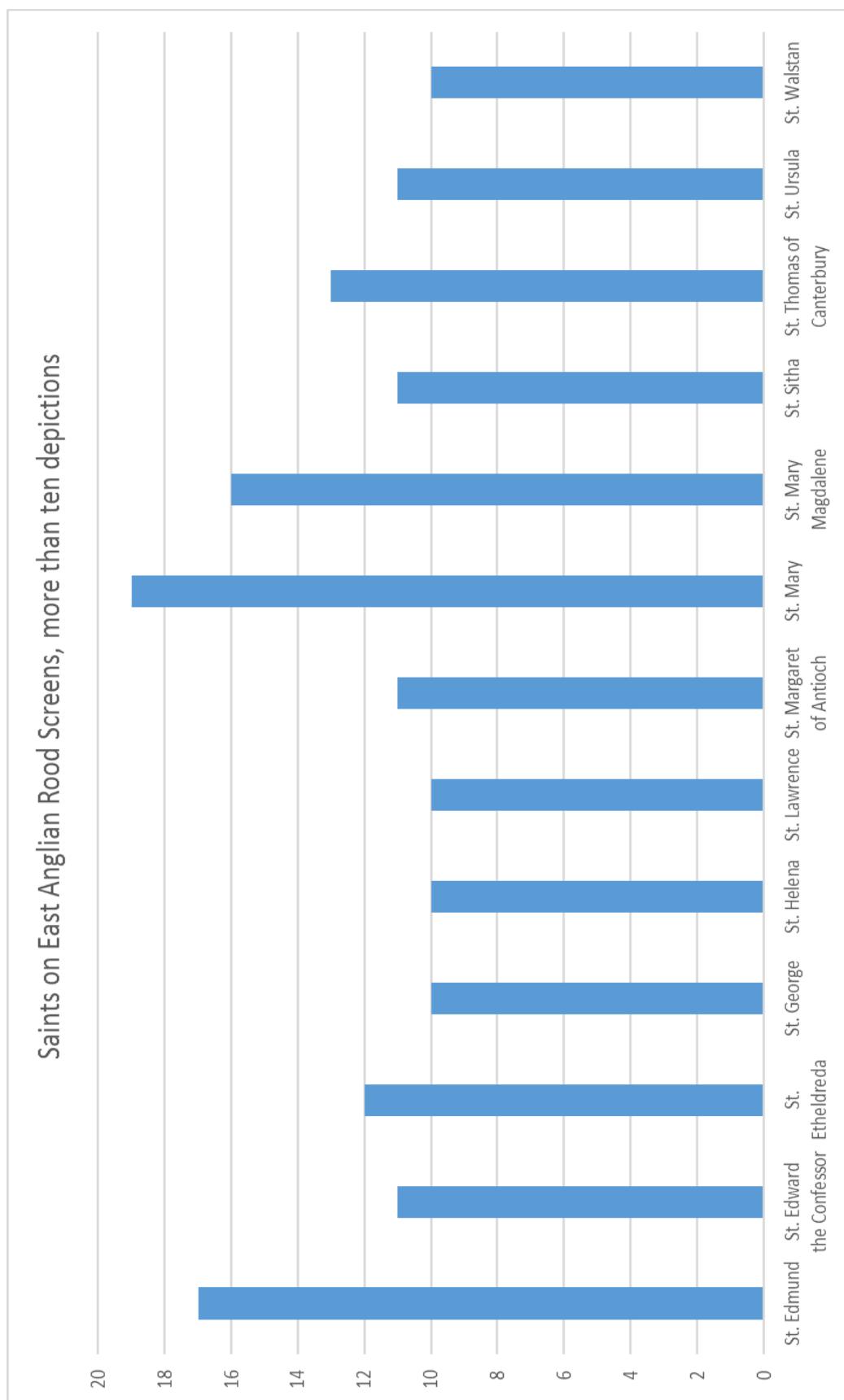


Figure 4.3: Saints on East Anglian rood screens, ten or more surviving depictions

Appendix 5: Offerings received at shrines, altars, chapels etc. at Norwich

Cathedral (not detailed in the text)

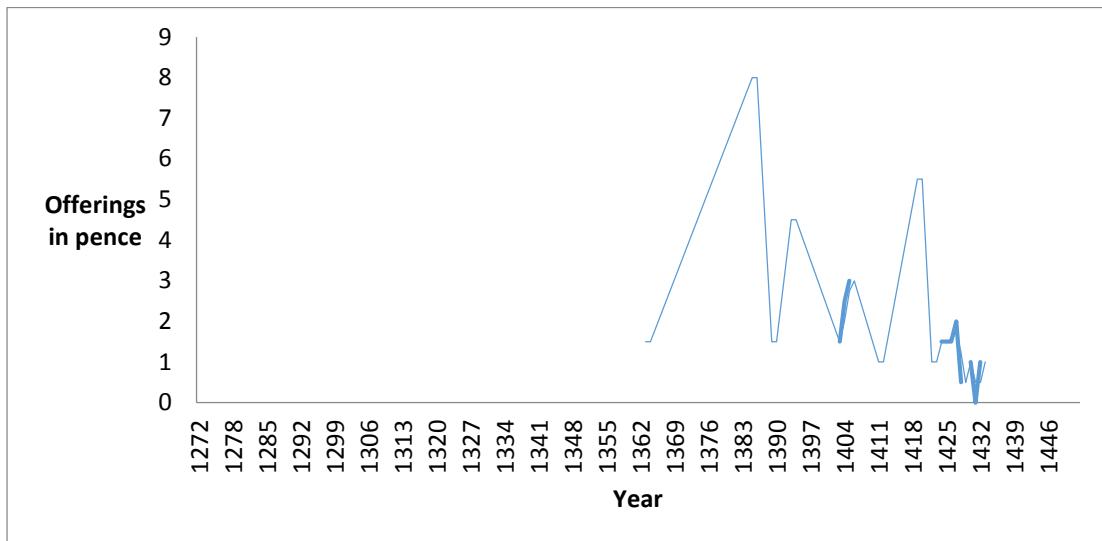


Figure 5.1: Offerings received at the shrine of St. Catherine⁹⁰⁸

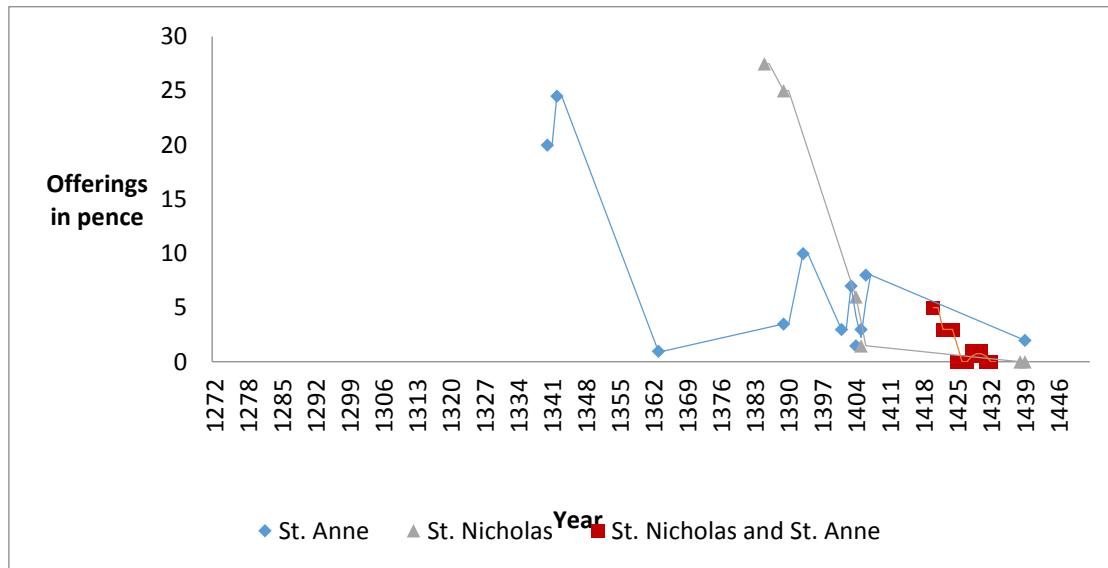


Figure 5.2: Offerings received at the shrines of St. Anne and St. Nicholas (income highlighted in red was recorded under the combined heading of St. Anne and St. Nicholas in the accounts)⁹⁰⁹

⁹⁰⁸ NRO, DCN 1/4/35, 37, 38, 40, 46-48, 50, 55, 55-71

⁹⁰⁹ NRO, DCN 1/4/33-35, 37, 38, 40, 45, 46, 48, 49, 56-71, 76, 78

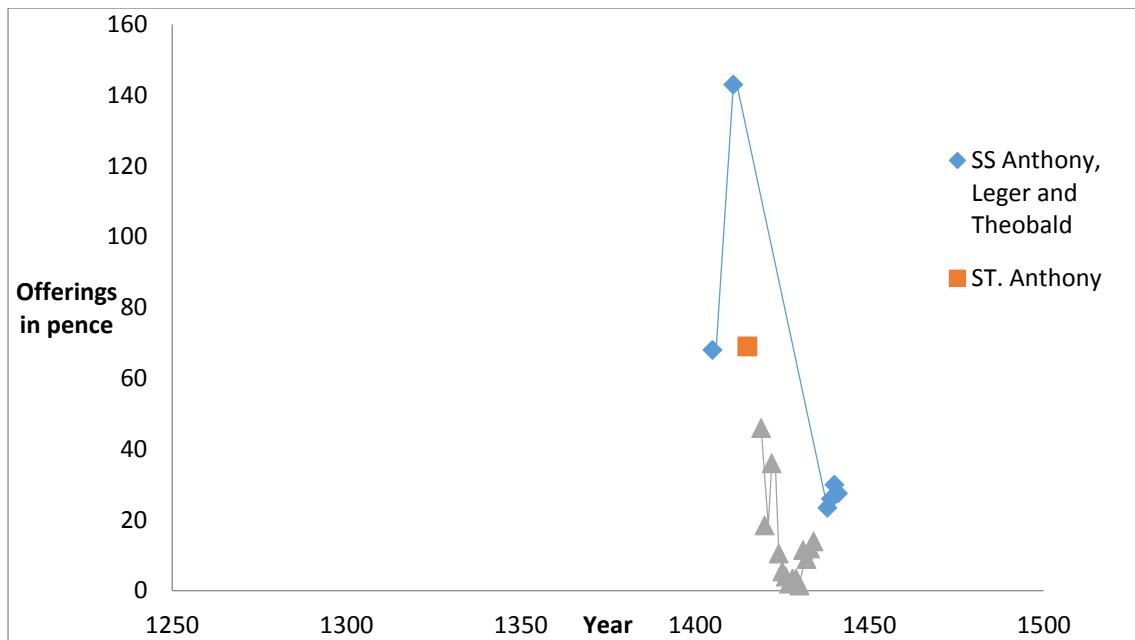


Figure 5.3: Offerings received at the shrines of SS Anthony, Theobald and Leger (income highlighted in blue was recorded under a combined heading for all three saints and income in grey was recorded under the combined heading of St. Leger and St. Anthony)⁹¹⁰

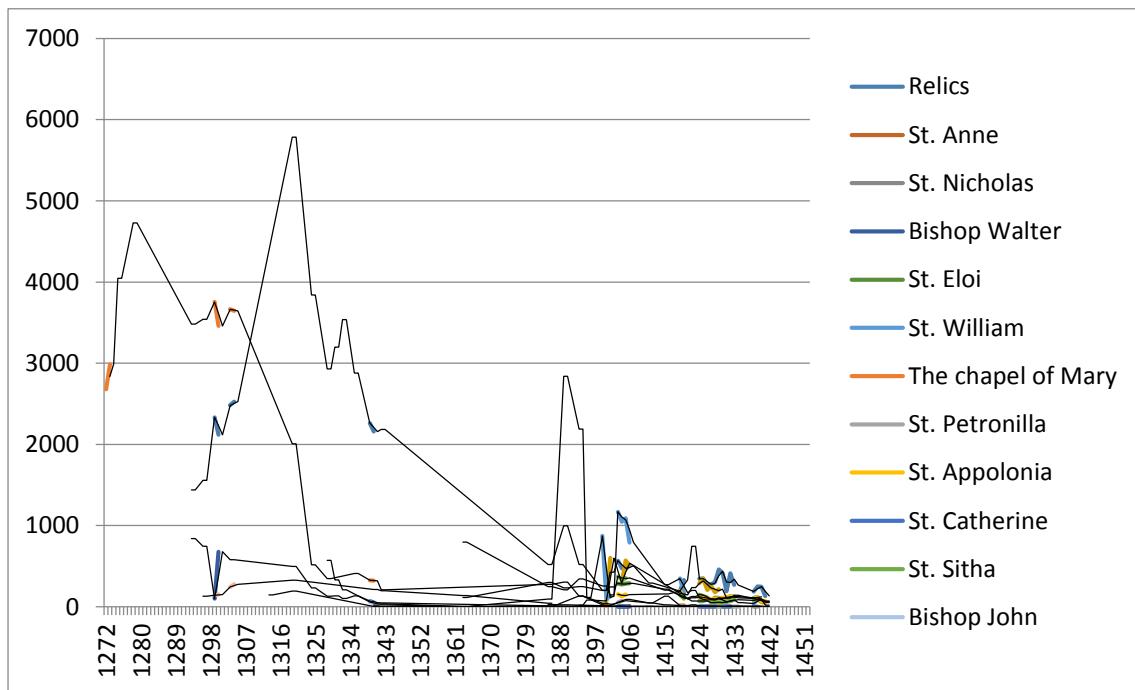


Figure 5.4: Graph detailing annual offerings to all shrines, altars etc. listed in the Norwich Cathedral rolls⁹¹¹

⁹¹⁰ NRO, DCN 1/4/48, 50, 51, 55-74, 76, 78-80

⁹¹¹ NRO, DCN 1/4/1-83

Appendix 6: Subsidiary altars and shrines at St. Leonard's Priory, Thorpe Hamlet, Norwich (not detailed in the text)

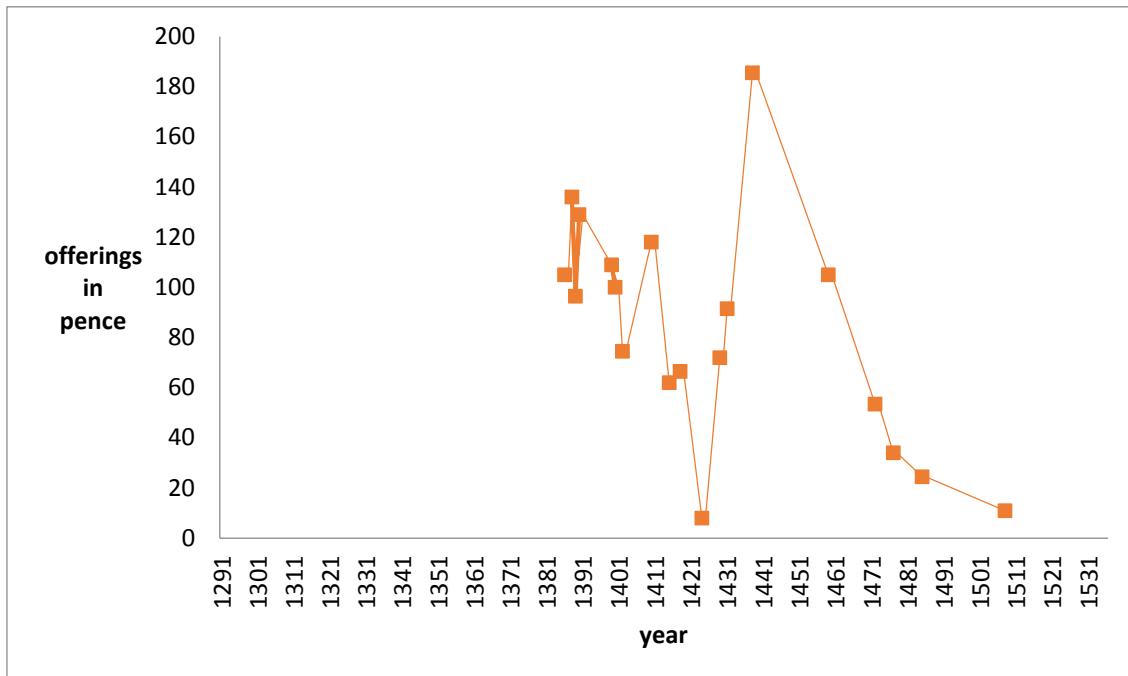


Figure 6.1: Offerings received at the altar of St. Anthony⁹¹²

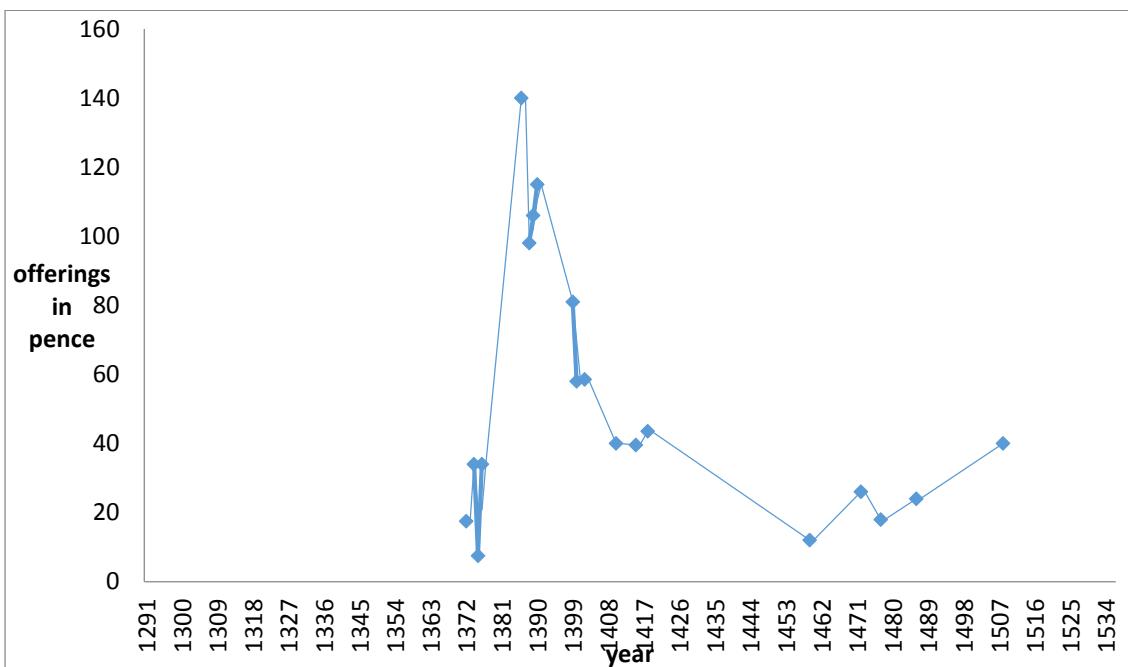


Figure 6.2: Offerings received at the chapel of St. Michael⁹¹³

⁹¹² NRO, DCN 2/3/9, 18-20, 27, 32, 35, 40, 46, 47, 53, 71, 82, 87, 91, 110

⁹¹³ NRO, DCN 2/3/2, 3, 7-10, 18-20, 27, 32, 35, 71, 82, 87, 92, 110

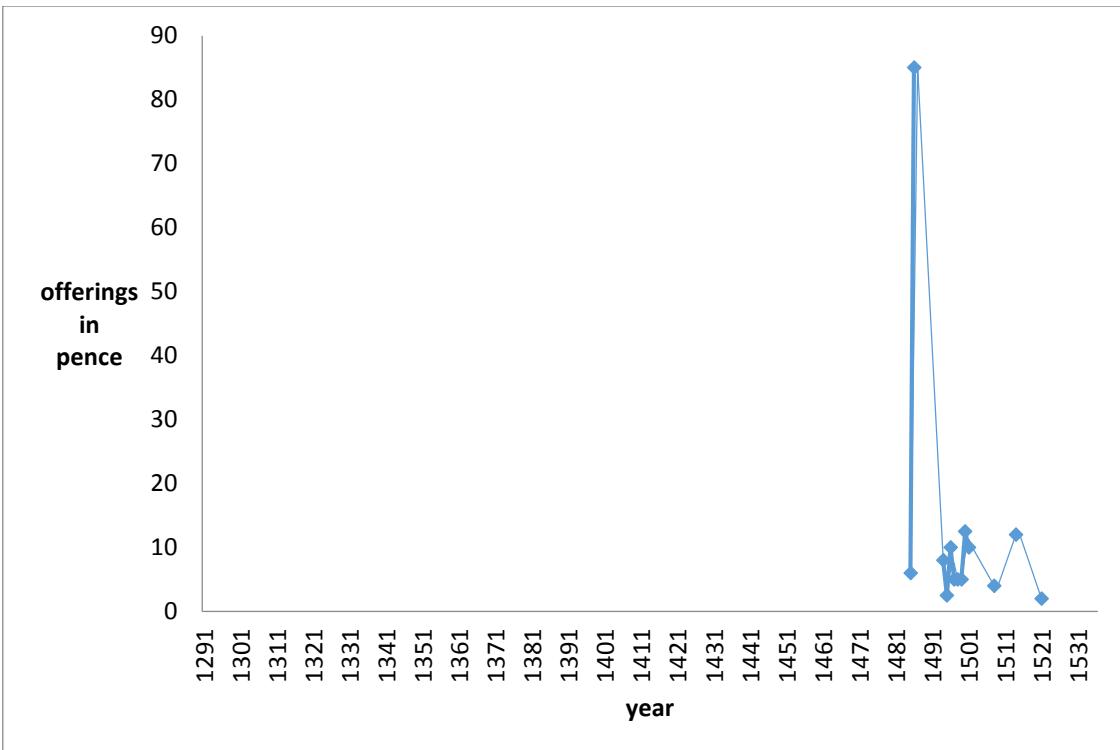


Figure 6.3: Offerings received at the image of Henry VI⁹¹⁴

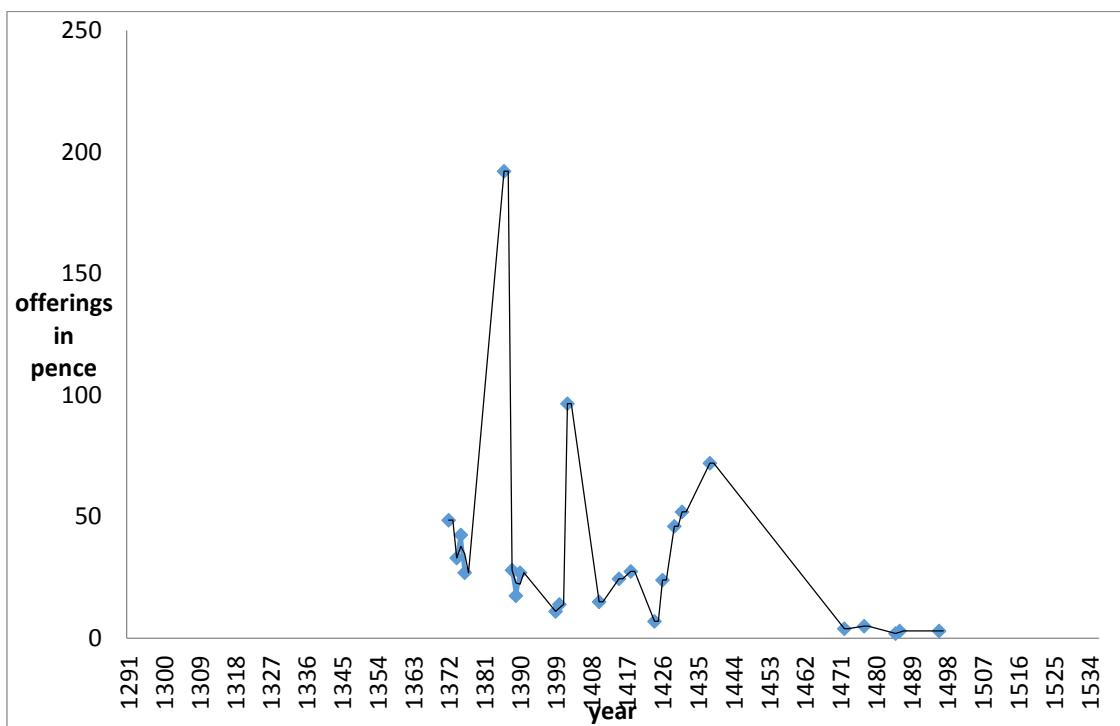


Figure 6.4: Offerings to St. Mary⁹¹⁵

⁹¹⁴ NRO, DCN 2/3/91, 92, 99-107, 110, 114, 121

⁹¹⁵ NRO, DCN 2/3/2, 3, 6, 8-10, 19, 20, 27, 32, 35, 40, 44, 46, 47, 53, 82, 87, 91, 92, 101

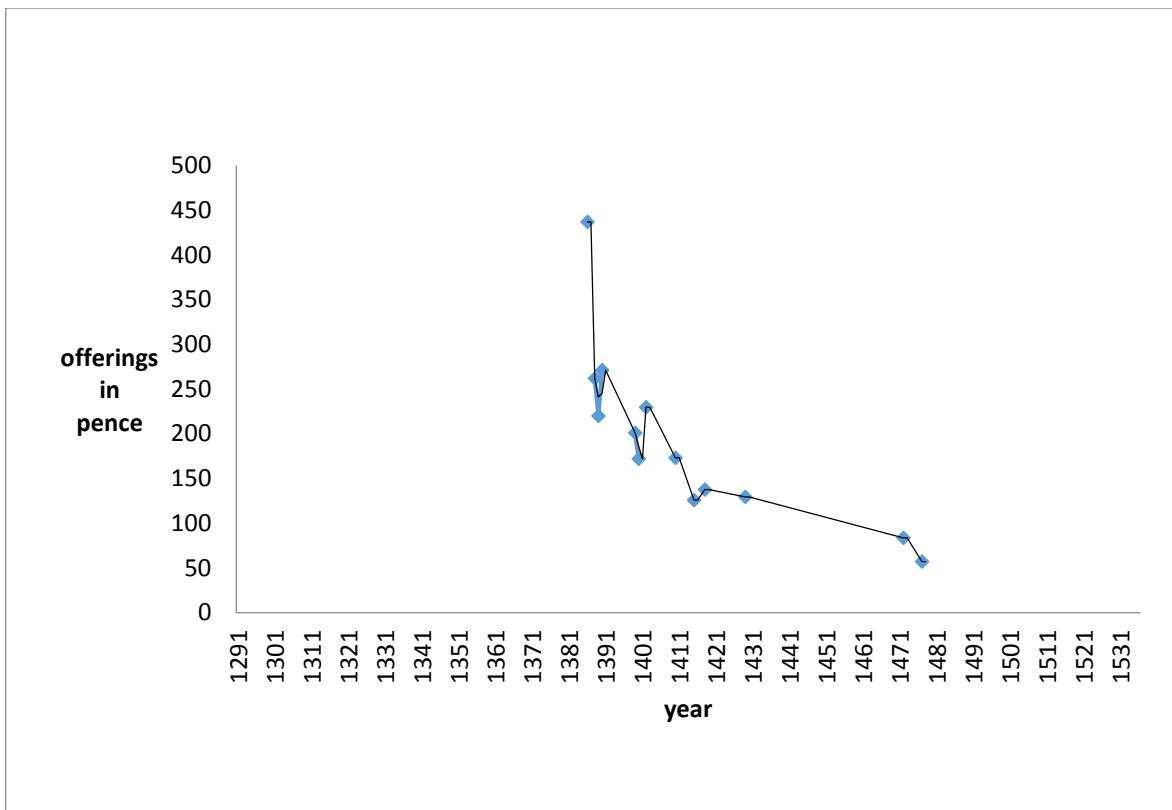


Figure 6.5: Combined income of all the subsidiary images, altars etc. at St. Leonard's Priory (data points recorded for all years where income to all locations was recorded and rolls were legible)⁹¹⁶

⁹¹⁶ NRO, DCN 2/3/1-110

Appendix 7: Examples of comparative annual income in offerings to selected saints at Norwich Cathedral priory and two of its dependent cells

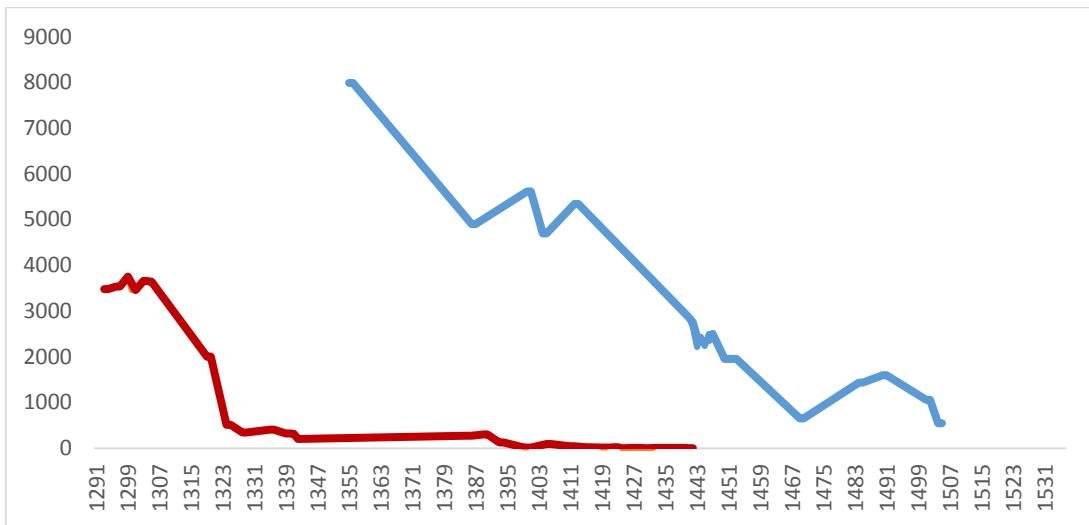


Figure 7.1: Comparative income to the chapels of St. Mary at Norwich (red) and Great Yarmouth (blue)⁹¹⁷

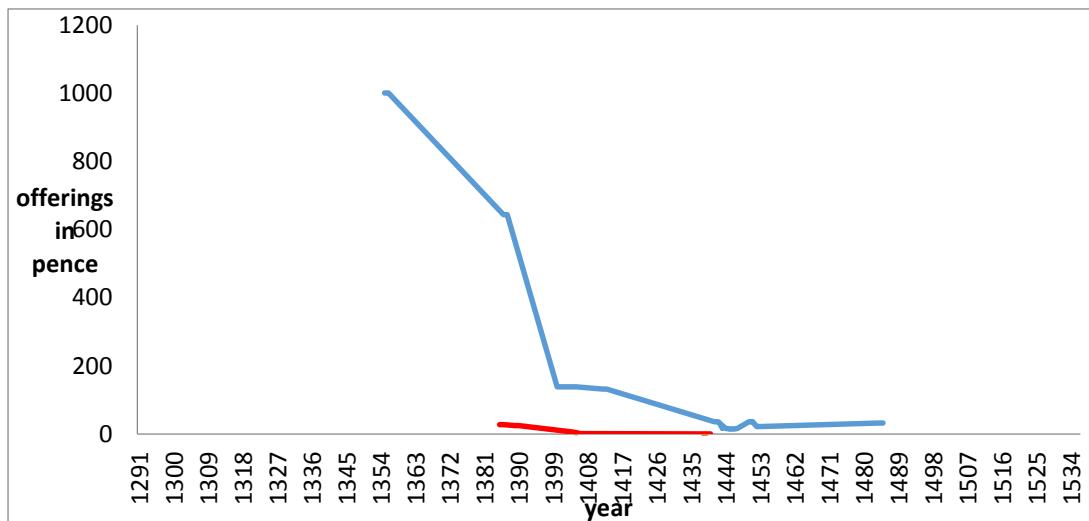


Figure 7.2: Comparative offerings to St. Nicholas at Norwich (red) and Great Yarmouth (blue)⁹¹⁸

⁹¹⁷ NRO, DCN 2/3/2, 3, 6, 8-10, 19, 20, 27, 32, 35, 40, 44, 46, 47, 53, 82, 87, 91, 92, 101 & DCN 1/4/1-4, 11-15, 16, 20, 23, 25, 31-34, 37, 38, 40, 42, 44, 47, 50, 51, 55-71, 78, 80

⁹¹⁸ NRO, DCN 1/4/37, 38, 47, 48, 76, 78 & DCN 2/4/1-13, 16

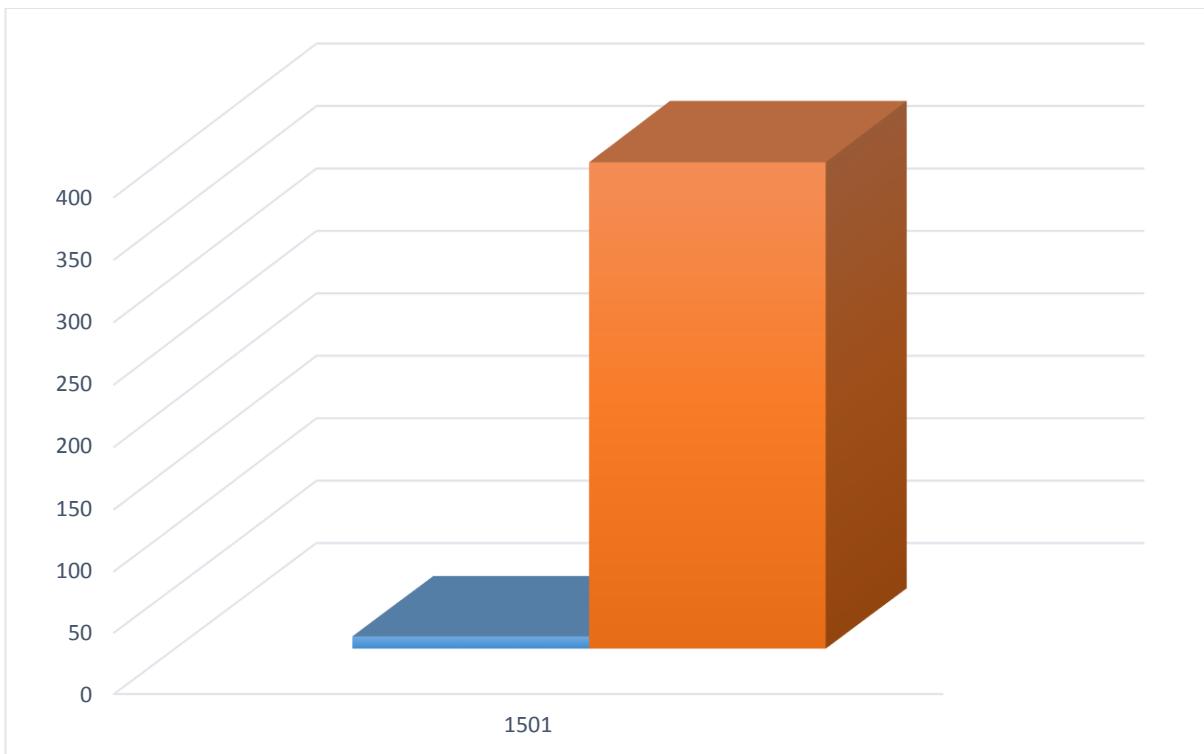


Figure 7.3: Income received at the image of Henry VI at St. Leonard's (blue) and Great Yarmouth (orange) for the year 1501⁹¹⁹

⁹¹⁹ NRO, DCN 2/3/107 & DCN 2/4/19

**Appendix 8: Selected badges, ampullae and related items in the collections
of the Norfolk Museums Service⁹²⁰**



Figures 8.1 and 8.2: Limestone mould featuring the Walsingham broad arrow motif on one side and the monogram 'ihs' (ihesus hominum salvator) on the other, King's Lynn Museum



Figures 8.3 and 8.4: Two badges depicting an abbess, almost certainly attributable to St. Etheldreda's shrine at Ely, King's Lynn Museum

⁹²⁰ All photographs by author



Figure 8.5: Crucifix badge with prominent titulus similar to the more stylised patriarchal cross employed by Bromholm priory, King's Lynn Museum



Figure 8.6: Badge depicting a group of arrows bordered by a girdle. This badge most likely originated at Bury St. Edmunds, with the arrows symbolising the means of Edmund's martyrdom and the girdle perhaps referencing his supposed virginity, King's Lynn Museum



Figure 8.7: Various designs of badges from Canterbury depicting Thomas Becket, King's Lynn Museum



Figures 8.8 and 8.9: Badges from Walsingham: The Holy House (top image) and the Annunciation depicted within closed frame badges (bottom image), King's Lynn Museum



Figures 8.10 and 8.11: Two Norfolk badges of Richard Caister preaching from a pulpit, King's Lynn Museum (left) and Norwich Castle Museum (right)



Figure 8.12: Scallop shell pilgrim token; this souvenir has unusually no means of attachment to the owners clothing. Spencer has tentatively identified this badge as originating from Compostela,⁹²¹ although the scallop shell motif developed to signify pilgrimage in general and this item may therefore have originated from any number of locations.

⁹²¹ Spencer, *Badges from Norfolk*, p. 26



Figure 8.13: Two leaves of a triptych depicting the Visitation and Annunciation (top compartment), the Adoration of the Magi (middle compartment) and the Massacre of the Innocents (bottom compartment). Although this panel was produced using the same processes as the casting of pilgrim tokens it nevertheless represents a rather superior and more costly souvenir. On the owner's return from pilgrimage panels such as this could be displayed as proof of pilgrimage and used for private prayer and contemplation.

Appendix 9: Location co-ordinates of all East Anglian shrines and supposed holy wells discussed in the text

1. Locations of shrines

	Easting	Northing
Ashfield cum Thorpe, Suffolk, St. Peter (ruined)	619938	262260
Bawburgh, Norfolk, St. Walstan and St. Mary	615269	308635
Bixley, Norfolk, St. Wandragesilius (ruined)	625854	304964
Blythburgh, Suffolk, Holy Trinity	645066	275316
Bracondale, Norfolk, St. Nicholas (demolished)	623787*	307419*
Bromholm Priory, Norfolk (ruined)	634767	333240
Bury St. Edmunds Abbey, Suffolk (ruined)	585723	264104
Castle Acre Priory, Norfolk (ruined)	581446	314823
Cringleford, Norfolk, St. Ethelbert (demolished)	619559*	395137*
Crostwight, Norfolk, All Saints	633395	329989
East Dereham, Norfolk, St. Nicholas	598666	313308
Elsing, Norfolk, St. Mary	605157	316537
Ely Abbey, Cambridgeshire	554132	280255
Foulsham, Norfolk, Holy Innocents	603283	325062
Great Hautbois, Norfolk, St. Mary (ruined)	626163	320426
Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, St. Nicholas	652447	308030
Haughley, St. Mary	602599	262301

Holkham, Norfolk, St. Withburgha	587813	343627
Horning, Norfolk, St. Benet's Abbey (ruined)	638344	315635
Horstead, Norfolk, All Saints	626283	319911
Ipswich, Suffolk, St. Mary (demolished)	615993	244757
Kersey, Suffolk, St. Mary	600197	243949
King's Lynn, Norfolk, Red Mount	562467	319840
Lakenham, Norfolk, St. Mark	623422	307447
Laxfield, Suffolk, All Saints	629612	272442
Long Melford, Suffolk, Holy Trinity	586508	246759
Long Stratton, Norfolk, St. Peter (demolished)	620619	293570
Martham, Norfolk, St. Mary	645501	318442
Norwich Cathedral Priory, Norfolk	623517	308916
Norwich, Norfolk, St. Stephen	622920	308298
Reepham, Norfolk, St. Mary	610139	322853
Stanton, Suffolk, All Saints	596580	273440
Stoke by Clare, Suffolk, St. John the Baptist	574096	243345
Sudbury, Suffolk, St. Gregory	587058	241485
Thetford, Norfolk, Priory of St. Mary (ruined)	586655	283399
Thorpe Hamlet, Norfolk, St. Leonard's Priory (demolished)	624172	308847
Tibenham, Norfolk, All Saints	613482	289895
Trimingham, Norfolk, St. John the Baptist's head	627940	338752
Walsingham Priory, Norfolk (ruined)	593505	336802

West Acre Priory, Norfolk (ruined)	578029	315031
Winfarthing, Norfolk, St. Mary	610930	285711
Woolpit, Suffolk, St. Mary	597436	262479

*co-ordinates are approximate only

2. Locations of holy wells

Badley, Suffolk, Lady well	606117	255167
Bawburgh, Norfolk, St. Walstan's well	615289	308723
Beccles, Suffolk, St. Mary's Hill spring	641763	290040
Blythburgh, Suffolk, Queen Anne's well	645007	276226
Brettenham, Suffolk, St. Chad's well	593330	282993
Burgh Castle, Norfolk, St. Fursey's well	647502	305005
Burnham Norton, Norfolk, Lady's well	583788	342894
Bury St. Edmund's, Suffolk, Holy well	584996	263181
Costessey, Norfolk, St. Walstan's well	615419	311406
Coxford, Norfolk, Mary Bones well	584726	328784
Dunwich, Suffolk, St. James well	647355	270585
East Dereham, Norfolk, St. Withburgha's well	598649	313299
Ely, Cambridgeshire, St. Etheldreda's well	554091*	280245*
Erwarton, Suffolk, Holy well	622316	234866

Exning, Suffolk, St. Mildred's well	562079	264510
Flitcham with Appleton, Norfolk, Holy well	570594	327258
Fersfield, Norfolk, St. Anne's well	606536	282862
Freston, Suffolk, Holy well	616678	239351
Grantchester, Cambridgeshire, Tarter's well	543106	254871
Great Barton, Suffolk, St. John's well	588959	266881
Gressenhall, Norfolk, St. Agnes' well	594830	315873
Grimston, Norfolk, St. Botolph's springs	572074	321907
Hinderclay, Suffolk, St. Mary's well	602008	278070
Hoxne, Suffolk, St. Edmund's well	618392*	276398*
Hunstanton, St. Edmund's wells	567585*	341958*
Ipswich, Suffolk, Holy wells	617540*	243379*
Mildenhall, Suffolk, Holy well	571224*	277091
Norwich, Norfolk, All Saints well	6230998	308001*
Santon, Suffolk, St. Helen's well	584039	287387
Sedgeford, Norfolk, Lady well	570500	336450
Shelfanger, Norfolk, St. Anne's well	610735	283584
Stow Bedon, Norfolk, Pilgrim's well	595680	294720
Sudbury, Suffolk, Pulcher's well	587120	241240
Thetford, Norfolk, Holy well	587138	282635
Walsingham, Norfolk, Wishing wells	593589	336771
Wereham, Norfolk, St. Margaret's well	568051	301691

Weybourne, Norfolk, St. Botolph's well	611153*	343040*
Woolpit, Suffolk, Lady's well	597627	262632
Wymondham, Norfolk, Becket's well	610555	301477

*co-ordinates are approximate only