

Saints and their Communities

*Miracle Stories in
Twelfth Century England*

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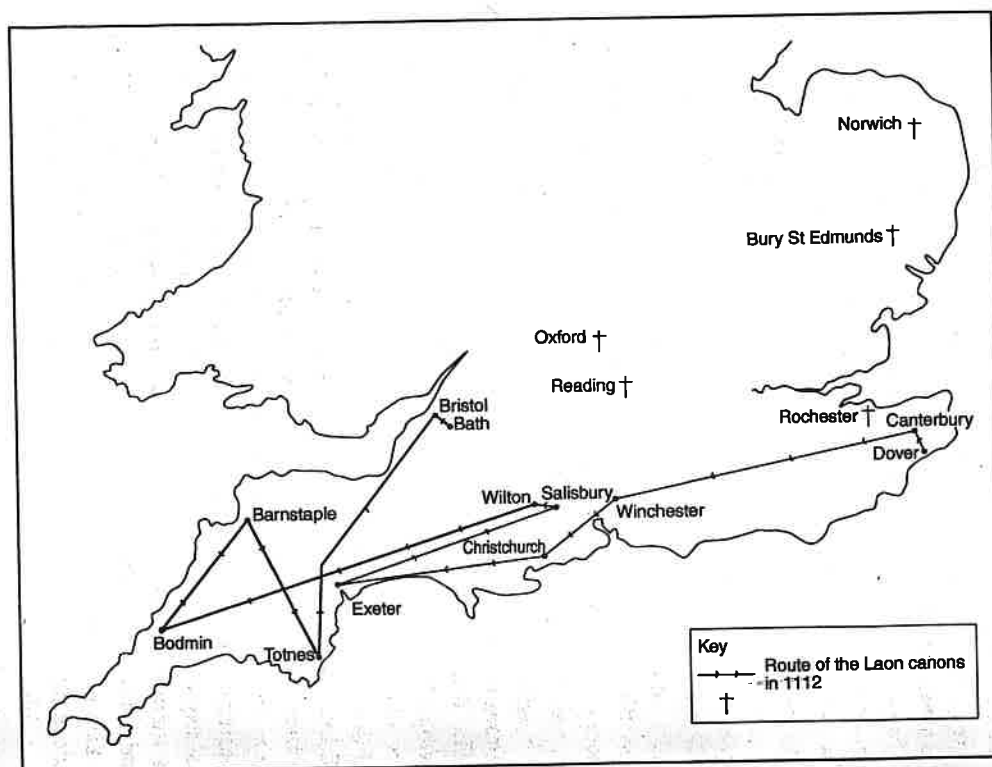
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The Cult of St Edmund of Bury

Two decisive developments in the history of the East Anglian church took place in 1095. On Sunday 29 April, after Bishop Walkeïn of Winchester sprinkled the decorated altar with water he had blessed, the relics of St Edmund together with those of two seventh-century East Anglian saints, Jurnin and Botolph, were carried by the monks of the community to the newly built abbey church of Bury. The great church was so brimming with people on that day that a visiting knight of Northampton had his arm crushed in the crowd. The accident could not, however, tarnish the day for Baldwin, abbot of Bury. At both a personal and a communal level, St Edmund lent the weight of his approval to the occasion. The Northamptonshire knight's limb miraculously recovered and, after a procession of the relics, rain ended a drought and marked the beginning of a spell of weather that was to deliver a good harvest later in the year. Finally, the presiding bishop, Walkeïn of Winchester, announced an indulgence to those who visited the shrine of the saint. Many people, from diverse regions of England, took advantage of the offer.¹

Abbot Baldwin's success signalled a setback for successive bishops of East Anglia, Herfast and Herbert de Losinga. Both had fought for some time to exercise authority over the abbey, perhaps even to appropriate it as the centre of an episcopal seat in Suffolk. Their exact claims to authority over the abbey church are obscure and tenuous. What little that can be gathered from the sources bears the signs of fabrication.

¹ Hermann, *Liber De Miraculis Sancti Edmundi*, in T. Arnold (ed.), *Memoriae of St Edmund's Abbey*, RS, 96, 3 vols. (London, 1890–6), i, 84–91. Henceforth, this miracle collection will be cited as Hermann, *De Miraculis*. For convenience, the collection produced in the late 12th cent that is edited in the same volume by Arnold and attributed to Abbot Samson will be cited as Samson, *De Miraculis*, despite more recent modifications made to Arnold's direct attribution.



Map 1. Shrines features as case studies in this book (including the relic tour of the Laon canons).

A charter of 1101 and a brief *narratio* probably produced between 1103 and 1119 provide as much information as we can know of the episcopal perspective on the issues involved. The charter locates the first resting place of St Edmund's body at Hoxne, an episcopal centre of the tenth century. Whilst such a possibility is conceivable, a more convincing site for the martyrdom has been proposed in Bradfield St Clare, nearer to Bury.² The *narratio*, a history of the early diocese, survives in a thirteenth-century manuscript and is accompanied by the commentary of a Bury monk. It argues for Bury as the Suffolk seat of the bishopric from ancient times, and Herfast as rightful heir to the see. Bury's status as an abbey under Baldwin was stressed as an irregular novelty, the consequence of monastic reform and confusion about episcopal succession from the reigns of Cnut to William I. The Bury commentator cites Bede in dismissal of the *narratio*, and goes on to note Herfast's failure to make good his claims on two grounds, 'not only through judgment but through the evidence of miracles we know to have happened'.³ He then proceeds to tell the story of a blindness that overcame Herfast at the height of his campaign against the abbey. Thanks to the prayers of St Edmund, and after dropping his lawsuit, Herfast's sight returned.

The Bury monk's source for this story was the *De Miraculis Sancti Edmundi*, a collection of miracles written by Hermann, a monk of Bury, in the years immediately following the death of Abbot Baldwin. In addition to a description of the events that occurred on the day of St Edmund's translation, the *De Miraculis* preserves a version of the legal disputes between Abbot Baldwin and Bishop Herfast, from the early 1070s to 1081.⁴ The account serves three purposes. First, it is an exposition of how Herfast brought illness and alienation upon himself as a consequence of stubbornly pursuing his legal claims against the abbey. For attempting to bribe the king he was punished by St Edmund, who blinded him in a riding accident. On Hermann's advice, Herfast sought the help of the medically trained Abbot Baldwin, whose treatment was made conditional on the bishop announcing his abandonment of the case publicly to a gathering of the foremost of the king's men. Herfast later went back on his word and took the matter to the royal court, where

he produced a crozier that he claimed had belonged to his predecessors at Bury, and witnesses in support of his case. The crozier, Hermann suggests, had been acquired by underhand means from Bury and the oral testimony was that of worthless and unlawful characters (*vilium testimonis personarum, non etiam legalium*).⁵ A final humiliation for Herfast was the security (*uadium*) he was made to pay by King William.

As well as establishing a narrative that framed in a moral context the failure of Herfast to win his objectives, a second aim of Hermann was to preserve a record of the abbey's privileges successfully upheld in legal contexts. The abbey had already secured an episcopal exemption for itself from Alexander II in 1072.⁶ At the risk of tedium to those listening to his account (*quoniam auditoribus tædio*), Hermann was careful to include the names of those *primores* who had acted 'in witness of the true record' (*sunt ueræ rationis testimonio*).⁷ They included Hugh de Montfort, Roger Bigod, and Richard, son of Earl Gilbert, all three of whom, from the evidence of writs, were active on behalf of the king in the county. Finally, the account gave Hermann the opportunity to eulogize Abbot Baldwin as a skilful orator and lawyer, using documents and argument in William I's court to secure royal charters documenting the abbey's rights against bishops.

Studies of the royal documents used by Baldwin suggest that the abbey may not have been as prepared to defend itself in law against the bishop as Hermann would have us believe in the *De Miraculis*. Whilst generally satisfied with the authenticity of Bury's writs, Florence Harmer expressed lingering doubts about the final sentence of an Anglo-Saxon writ of King Edward addressed to one of Baldwin's predecessors, Abbot Ulf, which reads, 'And I forbid that any bishop whatsoever appropriate to himself anything therein'.⁸ Two royal documents of 1081, a diploma and a writ, issued to the abbey, summarize the proceedings also described by Hermann, and announce officially the decision reached by the king in the matter. Scholarly opinion on the authenticity of the diploma has been mixed. Harmer suggests that its English section, at

² S. E. West, 'A New Site for the Martyrdom of St Edmund', *PSLA* (1984-5), 223-4.

³ V. H. Galbraith, 'The East Anglian See and the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds', *EHR* 40 (1925), 228, 'non tam per iudicium quam per evidens miraculum novimus contigisse'.

⁴ Hermann, *De Miraculis*, 60-7.

⁵ *Ibid.* 60.

⁶ Hermann recorded a number of miracles performed by the secondary relics of St Edmund in the diocese of Lucca, on Baldwin's journey to Rome. These were particularly valuable in smoothing the way for a papal confirmation since Alexander II had previously been bishop of the diocese. *Ibid.* 67-9.

⁸ F. Harmer, *Anglo-Saxon Writs* (Manchester, 1952), 154.

⁷ *Ibid.* 64.

least, was written by its beneficiaries and takes an aggressive line on the issue of episcopal exemption. She also reflects on its utility to the abbey in corroborating a series of purportedly earlier charters documenting the abbey's exemption from episcopal authority, 'not one [of which] is above suspicion'.⁹ Such a reading of the evidence would attach special importance to Hermann's writing up of the story in a parallel, hagiographical version, reinforcing and concealing to its audience the effects of pious fraud committed in the interests of clothing a newly established legal exemption in an antique mantle. That these different types of written material shared a common purpose is implied in their placement along with an eleventh-century Gospel and a copy of Abbo of Fleury's *Passio Sancti Edmundi* by the shrine of the saint.¹⁰ The translation of St Edmund's body marked the end of realistic episcopal ambitions to absorb the abbey's lands and liberties into the bishop's possession. Though Bishop Herbert later and in vain sought papal validation of his rights,¹¹ across the fens and claylands, the second important ecclesiastical event of 1095 was Herbert's decision to commence the building of a new cathedral church at Norwich.¹²

Record of the abbey's vindication in disputes with bishops formed but one episode in Hermann's *De Miraculis*, a work that charted the history of the monastery and the cult of the saint back to Edmund's martyrdom in 870. The subject of St Edmund's spiritual patronage of the abbey and sections of East Anglian lay society, as represented in the *De Miraculis*, occupies the remainder of the chapter. Before discussing its contents, some treatment of its manuscript tradition is necessary.

In contrast to most of the collections studied in this book, which have only survived in a single manuscript, collections of the miracles of St Edmund have survived in composite versions built upon the work of Hermann.¹³ Problems of their dating, attribution, and separation into

⁹ F. Harner, *Anglo-Saxon Writs* (Manchester, 1952), 144.

¹⁰ R. M. Thomson, 'Early Romanesque Book Illustration in England: The Dares of the Pierpont Morgan "Vita Sancti Edmundi" and the Bury Bible', *Vision*, 2 (1971), 215.

¹¹ Eadmer of Canterbury, *Historia Novorum in Anglia*, tr. G. Bosanquet, *Eadmer's History of Recent Events in England* (London, 1964), 139–40.

¹² For the likely date that Herbert began building, see B. Dodwell, 'The Foundation of Norwich Cathedral', *TRHS*, 5th ser. 7 (1957), 6.

¹³ In this respect the sources most closely resemble, albeit on a smaller scale, those for the miracles of Benedict of Fleury, for which see D. W. Rollason, 'The Miracles of St Benedict: A Window on Early Medieval France', in H. Mayr-Harting and R. I. Moore (eds.), *Studies in Medieval History presented to R. H. C. Davis* (London, 1985), 73–90.

constituent elements have long taxed the minds of modern editors and historians.¹⁴ In questions of attribution, additions, and dating, Rodney Thomson's recent analysis of these and other pertinent manuscripts have formed the basis for subsequent historical works on the subject. Without slavishly repeating all the clues and interpretations leading Thomson to his conclusions, some summary of them is required in order to establish the broad historical contexts from which a proper study of the narratives can proceed.

The earliest survival of Hermann's miracle collection is in B.M. Cotton Tiberius Bii, the narratives in it written c. 1100. The collection consists of a prologue and fifty chapters covering the period from Edmund's martyrdom to the translation of his relics in 1095. A further three narratives, one of them incomplete, are additions to the collection as it was intended in its original form.¹⁵ All the narratives are contained in one book. B.M. Cotton Titus Aviii, by contrast, is a composite collection divided into two books, each preceded by a prologue, the first book containing sixteen narratives, the second a letter and twenty-one narratives. It belongs to the early thirteenth century, probably between the death of Abbot Samson and the publication of Jocelin of Brakelond's *Chronicle* in 1204.¹⁶ From the evidence found in two other manuscripts, Rodney Thomson produced the most convincing schedule of production for the elements comprising Cotton Titus Aviii. Pierpont Morgan 736 contains miracles collected in two books of unequal length, whose anonymous author reproduced Hermann's material in a more efficient style and supplemented it with a handful of other narratives. The date for the recording of these miracles is c. 1124/5.¹⁷ The final manuscript left to be consulted is Bodleian 240, a large, late fourteenth-century compilation of saints' lives and miracles. Annotations in this manuscript provide invaluable clues to the sequence of compilation of the narratives found in manuscripts preceding it. From them Thomson drew the following

¹⁴ See *Memorials of St Edmund's Abbey*, ed. T. Arnold, 3 vols. (London, 1890–6), i, pp. xxxix, liii–lvi; and *The Letters of Osbert of Clare, Prior of Westminster*, ed. E. W. Williamson (Oxford, 1929), 26–32.

¹⁵ The following sentence completes the translation narrative and clearly marks the end of the original version: '... per martyrem sanctum laus Dei procedit in augmentum, cuius trophæum marit in ævum, in sæcula sæculorum. Amen.' It is likely that Hermann added more than three other narratives to subsequent recensions of his work.

¹⁶ Jocelin's chronicle contains miracles that would arguably have been recorded in Cotton Titus Aviii.

¹⁷ Thomson, 'Early Romanesque Book Illustration', 211–25.

conclusions. First, the Morgan manuscript of c.1124 drew on the miracles found in an early version of the Hermann text and recorded a number of fresh miracles occurring in the interim. Secondly, Osbert de Clare, exiled prior of Westminster abbey, recorded a group of thirteen miracles shortly after his return from a trip to Rome in 1139. Thirdly, the early thirteenth-century manuscript, Cotton Titus Aviii, was the compilation by an anonymous author of the following elements: a reworking of the Morgan collection by Abbot Samson, to which the latter appended a narrative that forms the sequel to an original Hermann miracle; and the collection of Osbert de Clare together with the prologue to book two and a letter following it, both also attributable to Osbert. Two other brief narratives and a poem inserted into book one before the eighth narrative are attributed to the compiler of Cotton Titus Aviii himself. Bodleian 240 contains a few narratives ascribed to Hermann but not appearing in Tiberius Bii or any of the subsequent compilations. Thomson attributes these to a later redaction of Hermann from which the fourteenth-century author was working. A number of other narratives falling outside the period of this study also appear in Bodleian 240.¹⁸

From this schedule it can be inferred that the cult of St Edmund remained the subject of monastic hagiographic attention at Bury throughout the twelfth century, five phases of hagiographical production discernible: the foundations laid in stages by Hermann c.1100; the refining of Hermann's material by the author of the Morgan manuscript c.1124; the collection of miracles, a letter and prologue written by Osbert de Clare in 1139; the reworking of Morgan by Abbot Samson probably some time in the 1190s; and finally the conflation of Samson and Osbert made by the author of Cotton Titus Aviii. For the purposes of this chapter, Thomson's schedule provides the historical contexts within which the two fundamental representations of the cult of St Edmund, those of Hermann and Osbert de Clare, will be examined. Hermann's *De miraculis* is the earliest work of hagiography to concentrate specifically on the posthumous miracles of St Edmund.¹⁹

¹⁸ See *Novae Legenda Anglie*, ed. C. Horsmann, 2 vols. (London, 1901), 636–7, 647–50, 653–63, 665–88.

¹⁹ As distinct from the earliest hagiographical work dealing with his life, including miracles performed *in vita*, the *Passio Sancti Edmundi* written by Abbo of Fleury in 985–7. The *Passio* survives in a late 11th-cent recension, an early English version testifying to certain revisions made to it.

Hermann was commissioned by Abbot Baldwin to write the work and it was produced within a few years of the latter's death in 1097. Hermann admits some familiarity with the household of Herfast, bishop of Thetford, and may have been an archdeacon of the diocese.²⁰ A monk called Hermann appears in a letter of Lanfranc to Herfast.²¹ Its purpose was to upbraid Herfast for his gaming and to recommend his study of the canon law, with particular diligence to be paid to those elements emphasizing the authority of the metropolitan.²² A second concern for Lanfranc in the letter was the bad conduct of Hermann the monk, the correction of which Lanfranc offers in either his banishment by Herfast from the country or his removal to a monastery. The modern editors of these letters suggest that Hermann was a wayward continental monk seeking ecclesiastical preferment.²³ It would be testimony to the gravity that Lanfranc's bishops attached to his metropolitan authority if the monk Hermann were to be identified with Archdeacon Hermann, the author of our miracle collection. That Hermann enjoyed an insider's knowledge of Herfast's episcopal household might also furnish an explanation for Baldwin's choice of him as author.

The *De Miraculis* is more than a simple register of the posthumous miracles performed at the shrine of St Edmund at Bury. It is a highly tendentious historical account of the abbey and the cult. As such it is of limited value as a guide to the actual past of the abbey, though admirable attempts have been made to separate fact from fiction and legend from actual event. Antonia Gransden's construction of a history that fits the facts so far as they can be distilled from a range of documentary and narrative sources is perhaps the most comprehensive.²⁴ Hermann's priorities, of course, were not those of the modern historian: he created

²⁰ A. Gransden, 'The Legends and Traditions Concerning the Origins of the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds', *EHR* 100 (1985), 9. See S. J. Ridyard, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England: A Study of West Saxon and East Anglian Cults* (Cambridge, 1988), 70 n. 252, for the alternative view that Hermann was a monastic rather than a diocesan archdeacon.

²¹ *Letters of Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. and tr. H. Clover and M. Gibson (Oxford, 1979), 150–3.

²² Z. N. Brooke, *The English Church and the Papacy: From the Conquest to the Reign of King John* (Cambridge, 1952), 58–9.

²³ *Letters of Lanfranc*, 152; and see *Rule of Saint Benedict*, ed. and tr. J. McCann (London, 1992), for the censure of monks who wander, 'given up to their own wills and the allurements of gluttony', pp. 15–17.

²⁴ A. Gransden, 'Legends and Traditions', 1–24. Also, see D. Whitelock, 'Fact and Fiction in the Legend of St Edmund', *PSA* 31 (1970), 217–33.

in his history a past to serve the needs of his present.²⁵ The account is a blend of public events taken from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, informed by excerpts from scripture and themes outlined in Abbo's *Passio* and other hagiographical sources, together with local traditions enduring in the social memory of the region and the abbey. From this material, Hermann selected his details for the purpose of fixing and disseminating a set of perceptions of the saint that were designed with the contemporary needs of the abbey in mind. Before examining what these needs were, it will first be beneficial to build up the picture of the past that Hermann intended his patron saint and abbey to inherit. A second task is to identify and define wherever possible the kinds of audiences among which Hermann intended these perceptions to be cultivated.

Susan Ridyard has produced an invaluable interpretation of the cult's early history based largely on the *Passio* of Abbo of Fleury and the *De Miraculis*. In her analysis of the *De Miraculis* Ridyard identified two important *personae* in Hermann's representation of St Edmund: Edmund as royal patron and Edmund as monastic patron. Both these elements of St Edmund's character are derived from the *Passio* of Abbo, though Hermann adapted them to serve as propaganda for the needs of the late eleventh-century abbey. The way the two roles coalesce in the narratives and the contemporary purposes they served in doing so require some attention. Through a clever merging of these two identities Hermann deliberately composed his narratives for the ears of certain distinct audiences. Each can be defined in terms of their social or political status in relation to the abbey.

The royal *persona* is the logical extension into Edmund's posthumous saintly career of his earthly role as king of the East Angles. It is a theme derived from Abbo of Fleury's *Passio*, in which he describes the removal of Edmund's body to Beodricesworth 'by many of the province not only the commoners but the nobles as well'.²⁶ Beodricesworth (later Bury)²⁷

²⁵ For a discussion of this topic, see M. Innes, 'Introduction: Using the Past, Interpreting the Present, Influencing the Future', in Y. Hen and M. Innes (eds.), *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2000), 1–8.

²⁶ Abbo of Fleury, *Life of St Edmund*, ed. M. Winterbottom, *Three Lives of English Saints* (Toronto, 1972), 82, 'provinciae multitudo, non solum vulgi sed etiam nobilium'. Abbo fails to provide a date for the translation, though Hermann suggests its occurrence before the reign of Aethelstan, c.924–39, *De Miraculis*, 29–30. Also, Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 214.

²⁷ The town's name switched from Beodricesworth to Bury at the beginning of the 11th cent. See M. Lobel, *The Borough of Bury St Edmund* (Oxford, 1935), 4–5.

was a royal vill. The translation of Edmund there Ridyard interprets as an act of political resistance to Danish rule by the surviving elites of the region, Abbo's *nobiles*. No dates are given in any of the sources for this early translation but Ridyard argues for the removal of his body there within fifteen years, before the minting of the St Edmund memorial coinage began around 895. We can in any case locate St Edmund's body at Beodricesworth by the years 926–51, the time of Bishop Theodred's possession of the sees at Ely and London. Theodred is mentioned in Abbo's *Passio*, passing judgement on eight thieves who attempted to plunder the shrine but were miraculously caught in the act.²⁸ In the story, Theodred has them all hanged but later repents of his decision. His will provides independent evidence of the bishop's personal devotion to the shrine of St Edmund. In it he leaves the manors of Nowton, Horningsheath, Ickworth, and Wepstead, all in the hundred of Thingoe, to the church of St Edmund, 'for bishop Theodred's soul'.²⁹

Independent of written sources the St Edmund memorial coinage, a collection of nearly two thousand coins inscribed on their obverse with the words, 'Sc Edmund Rex' provide 'numismatic evidence pointing to the king having been recognised a saint little more than twenty years after his death'.³⁰ From their scattered deposits, including some locations in Ireland and on the continent, Blunt has concluded that the coinage was used extensively, particularly across the regions of the Danelaw and was probably minted in its greatest amounts in East Anglia. Names of the moneyers themselves appear on a number of the coins, revealing the presence, for the first time, of Carolingian moneyers working in England. Their presence has been explained in terms of the Danish recruitment of moneyers from among Frankish captives who were known to have accompanied the Great Army at this time.³¹ The cult of St Edmund appears to have emerged from the immediate political circumstances in the wake of King Edmund's death. The exact circumstances of Edmund's death are obscure but the evidence suggests that the notion of his martyrdom followed close on its heels.³² Within two decades, Edmund's death had become a symbol of Christianity's triumph over the pagans

²⁸ Abbo of Fleury, *Life of St Edmund*, 83–4.

²⁹ D. Whitelock, *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (Cambridge, 1930), 5.

³⁰ C. E. Blunt, 'The Saint Edmund Memorial Coinage', *PSA* (1967–9), 240, 253.

³¹ V. Smart, 'The Moneyers of St Edmund', *Hikoin*, 11 (1985), 83–9.

³² Whitelock, *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 11 (1985), 83–9.

and the focus for a region's political identity that would endure.³³ The apparent Danish sponsorship of the memorial coinage suggests an effort on their part to placate this East Anglian community.³⁴

Veneration of the saint, then, served as a vehicle for the realization of successive dynastic ambitions in East Anglia. Abbo's *Passio* was based on the eye-witness account by Archbishop Dunstan—at the time of writing, in his mature and final years (*moribus et actis mature*)—of a story related by St Edmund's armour-bearer at the court of King Aethelstan.³⁵ Aethelstan's interest in the story of St Edmund's martyrdom was no doubt derived in part from his own experiences as head of the West Saxon dynasty, itself having struggled to survive Danish attacks. The cult, Ridyard notes, was also a means by which the West Saxons could extend their rule over East Anglia while ingratiating themselves with its elites who would ultimately lose out in such political circumstances.³⁶

When taken up by Hermann in the *De miraculis*, the subsequent history of the saint's cult sustains the idea of St Edmund as inhabiting a pivotal position between East Anglia as a discrete political entity and those outsiders seeking to consolidate their authority over it. In the case of the winners, Hermann emphasized the currency of Edmund's royal status by identifying him at the head of a line of successive kings of England, disregarding each one's dynastic affiliations. Upon reaching the year of William's victory at Hastings, he made a pause in the narrative to emphasize this theme of continuity in the rule of kings proceeding from that of King Edmund:

We briefly summarize by recording the reigns of as many kings as followed after the martyrdom of the precious martyr Edmund, namely fifteen that are witnessed in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, up to the time of William I, under whom French custom pervaded England and English affairs began to change in various ways.³⁷

In their dealings with St Edmund, however, as well as winners there were losers. When looking to the history of the cult at Bury Hermann could

think that he may have been killed without battle as a result of refusing to become a puppet ruler under the Danes, Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 215.

³³ Ibid. 226.

³⁴ Ibid. 223.

³⁵ Abbo of Fleury, *Life of St Edmund*, 67.

³⁶ Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 226.

³⁷ Hermann, *De Miraculis*: 'breuiter epilogizando tot regimina regum quot superius exaravimus post pretiosi martyris Eadmundi martyrium; videlicet xv ut chronica testatur Anglorum, usque ad tempus Willielmi prioris, sub quo Francorum mos per Angliam inolevit, res etiam Anglorum variabiliter alterari coepit' (p. 58). This does not appear in Samson's reworking of Hermann.

draw upon themes of disruption and threat overcome as well as harmony and continuity assured. The second wave of Viking raids in the early eleventh century furnishes two examples of such disruptions.³⁸

With the story of Thurkill's invasion in 1010, Hermann's theme of St Edmund as protector of the East Anglian people was compromised. Faced with Thurkill's naval landing at Ipswich, a monk called Egelwin took up the relics of St Edmund and journeyed through Essex, encountering an inhospitable priest who is punished for not recognizing the importance of his guest. Eventually the relics arrived in London, where the body was placed for three years in the church of St Gregory near the Eastgate.³⁹ During this period Edmund performed eighteen miracle healings for the citizens of London. Only one of these is described, the story of a presumptuous Dane, filled with fierce intent (*torva plenus intentione*), who was punished with blinding for removing the pallium that covered the saint's body. Later, after displaying a contrite heart, he had his sight restored.⁴⁰ Edmund's miracles inspired Aelfhun, bishop of London, to attempt a translation of the body from St Gregory's to the episcopal see of St Paul's. The story has topoi common to the genre of the *translationes* dealing with the *furta sacra*, or relic thefts. Their function was to explain the acquisition of relics by monastic communities through a story of righteous theft, in which the saint assents to his ritual kidnapping and reception into a new community. Each stage in the narrative corresponds to a ritual phase explaining the saint's rite of passage.⁴¹ The wandering around Essex, the encounter with the inhospitable priest and the difficulties met by Egelwin in trying to cross a narrow bridge, mark a phase of separation of the relics from their customary status. Next, St Edmund's deposition at St Gregory's, a small church (*ecclesiola*) just within the Eastgate, provides a liminal space within which the devotion shown Edmund could sometimes be awkward and ambiguous, as the story of the presumptuous Dane illustrates. The final stage of the story was usually one of aggregation, in which the relics were received into a new community and given a permanent status within that community. At this point Hermann subverts the genre by

³⁸ Antonia Gransden's reconstruction of the abbey's history sees these invasions as decisive in erasing the abbey's 'corporate memory' and breaking its late 10th-cent links with its founding community, Ramsey abbey. See 'Legends and Traditions', 20–1.

³⁹ Hermann, *De Miraculis*, 40–3.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 44.

⁴¹ See P. J. Geary, *Furta Sacra: Theft of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1978; rev. edn. 1990), 125–8, for a summary of this genre and the purposes it serves.

having the saint resist attempts at ritual kidnapping. The bishop could not move the bier because, 'although his devotion was good, such an intention was at odds with the will of the saint.'⁴²

Instead the saint desired his return to East Anglia and allowed himself to be carried by Egelwin back home to Bury.⁴³ The outcome of the narrative, rather than drawing attention to the abandonment of East Anglia by St Edmund in a period of political disruption, testifies to the continuing miraculous power of the saint, with the qualification that Edmund was a homesick saint, whose loyalties ultimately remained with the people of his East Anglian kingdom.

To this skilful hagiographical treatment of a potentially embarrassing historical episode Hermann added the narrative of another disruption, St Edmund on this occasion taking a more aggressive role as protector of his people against outsiders. A most conspicuous loser in his dealings with St Edmund was King Sweyn of Denmark. Sweyn invaded England on two occasions in the late tenth century, before securing the kingship of the Danelaw in 1013. He died a year later. Hermann's narrative of Sweyn precedes the Thutkell story, preserving something of the correct historical sequence of Danish incursions on English soil. The events detailed in the narrative, if they took place, must have done so after Edmund's putative stay in London.⁴⁴ Sweyn invaded England for a third time in 1013, landing at Gainsborough. King Ethelred, 'abandoning the regions of England and fleeing to Normandy with his wife', left the wealth of the region for Sweyn to tax.⁴⁵ The focus for resistance to the tax became centred on the monastery at Bury, the peasants of Bury (*cultores Beodencensis*) gathering around the shrine and exhorting St Edmund to direct Sweyn to remove the tax. St Edmund visited Sweyn in his sleep and warned him, 'Cease, cease to exact tribute which they have never under any king given. It was not taken or paid in the time of any of them after me, and if you do not remove this oppression from them, you shall soon know that you displease God and me on behalf of the people.'⁴⁶

⁴² Hermann, *De Miraculis*, 45: Bona quidem devotio, sed a voluntate sancti discrepabat talis intentio.

⁴³ For the opinion that Edmund's stay in London was fictional see Gransden, 'Legends and Traditions', 12.

⁴⁴ Hermann, *De Miraculis*, 33: 'Iniquas regiones Angliæ Normanniam petit cum uxore'.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 35: 'Cessa, cessa, tributum exigere, quod nullo decedunt sub rege, nec requisitum vel persolutum fuit post me eorum aliquorum tempore, quia si te ab hac intentione non removes, prope cognosces quod Deo michique pro populo displices'.

Despite the warning and a visit paid by Egelwin,⁴⁷ a Bury monk of particular devotion to Edmund,⁴⁸ Sweyn insisted on the tax and, for his obstinacy, met a sudden death. The narrative preserves and cultivates the notion of St Edmund existing into the tenth and eleventh century at the heart of a distinct, imagined community dating back to the ninth century and centred on Bury. Among the ears of those that Hermann intended this message to reach, a number may reasonably be identified in the following paragraph in which he sums up Edmund's defeat of Sweyn: 'And so the saint was held in more renown for so unexpected an event. It was felt that by his removal not only were the poor of his town free but throughout the whole of England the greedy invasion had ceased to rage, to the relief of the poor whom God had not forgotten.'⁴⁹

At the other end of the moral scale upon which his narratives are based, Hermann mentions Cnut and Edward the Confessor as two eleventh-century kings who deserved particular praise for the devotion they showed St Edmund. To them Hermann attributed responsibility for two important developments in the history of the abbey at Bury: Cnut's replacement of clerks by monks as custodians of the shrine and Edward's grant of liberty over the eight and a half hundreds of West Suffolk.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ The story illustrates the benefits of membership of a monastic community when confronted with unjust rule. The moral that it pays to seek mediation through recourse to the spiritual patronage of a monastery was unfortunately not heeded by the group of peasants in Normandy who in 996 rose against Duke Richard II and were severely punished for doing so. For this incident see *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* of William of Jumièges, Orderic Vitalis, and Robert of Torigni, ii, ed. and tr. E. M. C. van Houts (Oxford, 1995), 8-9.

⁴⁸ Egelwin is described here as *monachus* despite Hermann's later note that monks were not introduced to Bury until the reign of Cnut, c. 1020. See Gransden, 'Legends and Traditions', 20, for the possibility of a reformed religious community at Bury as early as the late 10th cent. Whether deliberate or otherwise, the anachronistic title and its holder, whose career bridged the gap of Cnut's alleged reform, are probably a device used by Hermann to emphasize the continuous occupation of the Bury monastery by Edmund. See the identification of Edmund's body by Egelwin, *De Miraculis*, 52.

⁴⁹ Hermann, *De Miraculis*, 37: 'Celebror ergo pro tam insperato facto habitus est sanctus ab ipso, cuius ereptione sensit liberos non solum suae pauperes villae, sed etiam per Angliam totam deturbasse invasionem gulosam, ad revelationem pauperum, quorum non obliviscitur Deus eorum'.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 46-7, 48. The franchise appears to have been administered as part of the estates of Edward's mother, Queen Emma. For evidence of this see Harmer, *Anglo-Saxon*

Cnut's role in refounding the monastery at Bury as a Benedictine abbey has been put in doubt by Antonia Gransden.⁵¹ A charter attesting to Cnut's foundation survives, though Harmer groups it among those royal charters upon which she casts doubt. Cnut's devotion to St Edmund is evidenced in his benefactions to the abbey and his bestowal of the relics of Jurnin and Bortulf on the abbey.⁵² Such generosity has been placed into its own political context by David Rollason, who has noted the importance to Cnut of manipulating relic-cults as a means of bolstering his own royal power.⁵³ Though the point does not concern Hermann, Cnut's policy toward the abbey was undoubtedly a response to his father's woeful mishandling of East Anglian politics a few years earlier. Hermann's interest in emphasizing the memory of Cnut as founder may have been intended to corroborate recently made forgeries laying down the rights of the abbey in a proper late eleventh-century context of legal and written practice.⁵⁴ In addition to this, it reflects his desire to emphasize St Edmund's power as a political broker in East Anglia.

Hermann records that King Edward granted to the abbey an important manor at Mildenhall and the liberty over the eight and a half hundreds of West Suffolk. This reference to a grant is corroborated in a genuine writ of c. 1043/4.⁵⁵ The writ entitled the abbey to exercise regalian rights within: Thredwestry, Babergh (two hundreds), Cosford (half-hundred), Blackbourne (two hundreds), Risbridge, Lackford, and Thingoe, in which was situated the town and its *banleuca*.⁵⁶ The appropriate manner in which kings were to approach the saint was with humility and care, Edward's illustrating this in his practice, with

Writs, 155, no. 9. The area itself suggests an ancient cohesion, probably as an independent shire of its own. See P. Warner, *The Origins of Suffolk* (Manchester, 1996), 147.

⁵¹ Gransden, 'Legends and Traditions', 19–22, for a meticulous scrutiny of the sources in arriving at the conclusion that Ramsey abbey was the more likely founder of the Benedictine abbey in the late 10th cent. See D. Knowles and K. N. Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses of England and Wales* (London, 1953), 61, for the Cnut attribution.

⁵² *Memorials of St Edmund's Abbey*, ed. T. Arnold, i, 351–2.

⁵³ See Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, 157–8, for Cnut's wider strategy of devotion and exploitation of local cults as a way of unifying the political identity of England.

⁵⁴ See M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record, England 1066–1307* (2nd edn, Oxford, 1993), 148, for the similar corroboration of forgeries made by Eadmer on behalf of the monks of Canterbury.

⁵⁵ Harmer, *Anglo-Saxon Writs*, 155, no. 9.

⁵⁶ H. W. C. Davis, 'The Liberties of Bury St Edmund's', *EHR* 25 (1909), 417–20, for Edward's grants.

his magnates (*cum optimatibus suis*), of descending from his horse and making the last mile to the holy martyr on foot.⁵⁷ Such niceties, it was to be hoped, would be observed by the new Norman kings.

Together with its estates the liberty of St Edmund provides the key to our understanding of Hermann's priorities in representing the cult of St Edmund at the end of the eleventh century. For an element in Hermann's depiction of St Edmund as royal patron, was the implicit idea that the prerogatives of kingship had always resided at Bury through the presence of his body there. As well as providing a 'way in' for those attempting to exercise rule over the community that derived its identity from its devotion to him, St Edmund functioned as a punisher of those usurpers of royal authority in the region. Two more of Hermann's narratives serve to illustrate the folly of such men whose administrative positions made them feel they could treat the abbey without respect for its prerogatives as custodian of St Edmund's remains. During the tenth century Leofstan, an evil sheriff in 'the diocese in which our saint is venerated' (*in diocesi qua noster veneratur sanctus*), visited the hundred of Thingoe to dispense judgement. He was accounted a savage man with too keen a regard for the business of visiting full punishment on the convicted. One of those accused, a woman, fled to the abbey to find sanctuary at St Edmund's shrine. Leofstan sent servants to the abbey to lead the plaintiff from the church and, Hermann comments, to establish 'which was the more powerful, either the martyr in setting her free or the judge in condemning' (*vel martyr in liberatione, aut iudex in damnatione*). The question of course did not go unanswered. Whilst the servants dragged the woman from the church, the clerics on their side were on their knees praying for vengeance with the seven penitential psalms and litanies.⁵⁸ The plaintiff was eventually freed and Leofstan was possessed by a demon for the rest of his life.

⁵⁷ Hermann, *De Miraculis*, 48.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*: 'Clerici hac illaque genuflectis vindictam imprecantibus septem psalmis et litanis'. Compare with Samson's rendering of the same episode: 'Videntes autem clerici abique impunitate praevalere satellitum audaciam, nimio percussi dolore circa sancti sepulchrum prosternuntur, cum psalmis et litanis lacrimosis singulibus plenae divinae ultionis iudicia imprecantur' (Seeing the evil accomplice prevail without punishment, the clerics were struck with anguish and prostrated themselves before the tomb of the saint and, full of sobbing called with psalms and litanies for the signs of divine judgement), 112–4. For examples of this form of ritual humiliation at the monasteries

The second example comes from the reign of Edward the Confessor. One summer Sunday Edward brought his court unexpectedly to Bury where it pleased the king that both English and Danes among his household should drink together. From among the Danish contingent, Osgod Clapa staggered into the church of St Edmund the morning after the party, swinging a battle-axe around his shoulders and both his arms adorned with bracelets. Edward arrived at the chapter of the monks for the purpose of seeking and strengthening his confraternity (*pro assensu et confirmanda societate*) with them and in time to witness his steward losing his mind. Once again it was the intervention of the monks on Osgod's behalf that saw him return to his senses: 'the brothers gathering around on bended knee and interceded for him by singing the seven psalms and litanies'.⁵⁹ Osgod Clapa was *major domus* of Edward's household. He is known to have witnessed a number of the king's charters from 1042, the year before Bury received its liberty, up until 1046 when he was outlawed.⁶⁰ In 1049 he organized a fleet of ships that failed to defeat Edward in an attack from the Channel, and in 1055 he died suddenly in bed. The context for Osgod's dealings with the abbey at Bury is obscure. All that can be said with confidence is that he held land in East Anglia which was later granted by the king to Bury, presumably in the wake of his fall from royal grace in 1046.⁶¹

The pre-Conquest subject matter of the *De Miraculis* is the relationship between St Edmund, his custodian community and the ruling classes of late Anglo-Saxon society. It is a series of narratives filled with kings, would-be kings, sheriffs, and other administrative hard-hitters. The illustration of these elite encounters with St Edmund together with their polarized outcomes, allowed Hermann the opportunity to flesh out a commentary on Bury's relations with post-Conquest society that, for all its novelty, carried the credentials of authentic tradition. Before

of Farfa and Tours see, P. J. Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1994), 97–9.

⁵⁹ Hermann, *De Miraculis*, 55: 'fratres circumcirca genuflectendo, septem psalmorum cantu lezanlique progressu intercedunt pro eo'. For a description of the various uses of litanies in the liturgy of the Anglo-Saxon church, see *Anglo-Saxon Litanies of the Saints*, ed. M. Lapidge, Henry Bradshaw Society (London, 1991), introduction. For a decorated Gallican Psalter containing a litany used at Bury in the second half of the 11th cent, ibid. 84–5, 296–9.

⁶⁰ F. Barlow, *Edward the Confessor* (2nd edn, London, 1997), 75.
⁶¹ Harmer, *Anglo-Saxon Writs*, 569, records land at Pakenham granted to Bury 'as full and completely as Osgod possessed it', Harmer dating the writ to 1044–7.

examining the substance of the themes Hermann crafted for post-Conquest consumption it is important to survey the immediate historical circumstances in which their design gave them a contemporary relevance.

The post-Conquest period for the abbey of Bury St Edmunds might be described as one of progress and prosperity in the face of disruptions and serious challenges from a number of sources. The progress experienced by the abbey is largely attributable to the achievements of Abbot Baldwin.⁶² Originally a monk of St Denis in Paris, Baldwin was rewarded with the abbacy of Bury in 1065, probably for his skills as physician to Edward the Confessor. In England, Baldwin continued to win royal favour for his abbey as physician to William I and then William Rufus. Charters from within the first five years of the Conqueror's reign confirm the abbey's liberty over the eight and a half hundreds, grant Baldwin the lands of those of the abbey's tenants slain fighting against the king, and confirm the right to a moneyer that Edward had previously granted the abbey.⁶³

Prior to the Domesday survey, the abbey was second only to Gloucester abbey in the number of benefactions it received, a fact that may reflect the early favour William I and Queen Matilda showed Bury and perhaps also the wider use by Baldwin of his medical skills among an elite clientele.⁶⁴ Under Baldwin the abbey was rebuilt on a grand scale.⁶⁵ The town itself, at the heart of the abbey's franchise, was also developed by Baldwin, its growth recorded in the Domesday Book. Over the first twenty years of Baldwin's abbacy the central settlement was extended into a previously arable area, arranged in a distinct grid containing a market and 342 new houses.⁶⁶ Its value by 1086 had doubled to £20. The town had experienced some growth as a fortified borough and administrative centre during the reigns of Cnut and Edward.⁶⁷ Baldwin's encouragement of merchants,⁶⁸ and his securing of a mint and

⁶² See A. Granden, 'Baldwin, Abbot of Bury St Edmunds, 1065–97', *A.N.S.* 4 (1981), 65–76.

⁶³ *RR4-NW1*, pp. 195, 197–8, nos. 34, 36–7.
⁶⁴ E. Cowie, *Religious Patronage in Anglo-Norman England, 1066–1135* (Woodbridge, 1998), 70–1. For evidence of a wider clientele based on recommendation, see *Letters of Lanfranc*, nos. 41 and 44.

⁶⁵ See *Feudal Documents from the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds*, ed. D. C. Douglas (London, 1932), no. 11, p. 57 for the abbey's rights to quarry and cart stone in its lands abutting Peterborough.

⁶⁶ H. C. Darby, *Domesday Geography of Eastern England* (Cambridge, 1957), 197–9.
⁶⁷ M. Lobel, *Borough of Bury St Edmunds*, 4–9.
⁶⁸ Ibid. 14–15.

moneyer, stole a march on many of the other urban centres of East Anglia⁶⁹ in the post-Conquest period and laid the foundations for further gains in the reigns of Henry I and Stephen.⁷⁰

Both Baldwin's successes and his methods in achieving them can be appreciated from the written records that he commissioned. As was the case with many of the ecclesiastical institutions of Anglo-Saxon England, Bury did not enjoy untrammelled possession of its estates into the reigns of William I and William Rufus. As we have seen in the early writs he secured from the Conqueror, Baldwin understood the importance of gaining royal support against those who would encroach on the abbey's lands and challenge its regalian rights. At his request, William II issued a series of charters soon after his accession that confirmed the rights of jurisdiction Baldwin had won from his father. Baldwin and the abbey were to hold all their lands and men as they had held them on the day that William I lived and died. The abbey was to enjoy its royal rights to the six forfeitures in the eight and a half hundreds and no man was to meddle in the lands of St Edmund.⁷¹ Further writs were won that clarified matters of procedure in disputes in ways that favoured the abbot. If any man had claim against the abbey right was to be done only after the abbot was put back in possession of the land. Men of the saint were not to be constrained to attend the shire or hundred courts unless they were shire or hundred worthy in the time of King Edward. St Edmund and his men were not to be implicated for anything of which the saint was seised on the day when William I died.⁷²

These writs hint at the incidence of certain kinds of jurisdictional and tenurial entanglements between the abbey and certain sections of the East Anglian laity even in the wake of the Domesday inquest. The case of Onehouse in Suffolk, recorded in the Domesday Book, illustrates one such aspect of the abbey's predicament. The abbey had received the sac and soc of half a carucate of land from King Edward in Onehouse and Baldwin presented a writ at the inquest to prove it. Though William I had confirmed it, one of the king's reeves continued to take 4s. from one

⁶⁹ Daby, *Domesday Geography*, 116–18, 136–7, and 192, for the relatively unfortunate experiences of Ipswich, Thetford, and Norwich in the early years of William I's reign.

⁷⁰ For Henry's grant of a fair and Stephen's grant of two more moneyers, *Feudal Documents*, no. 29, p. 66; no. 42, p. 73; and nos. 72–3, pp. 88–9.

⁷¹ *RR4-N*, i, 76–7, nos. 291–4, all issued in 1087. For the six forfeitures, see *Feudal Documents*, ed. Douglas, p. civi.

⁷² *Ibid.* 99–100, nos. 392–5, issued in the 1090s.

of the men for sok. The question of the reeve's legal probity in doing so remained open, though the hundred went on record to emphasize that no disseisin of the abbey's sok had occurred after King Edward's grant.⁷³ The Domesday Book was an unprecedented undertaking, part of whose aim, it has been argued, was the comprehensive registering of legal entitlements to land whose accumulation and transmission had previously been contested, the subject of confusion or controversy, or up to 1086, having been enjoyed merely on a *de facto* basis.⁷⁴ Baldwin's production of a writ for the land at Onehouse still did not, however, appear to guarantee him the rights to which Bury abbey claimed entitlement.⁷⁵ Baldwin commissioned his own survey of the abbey's lands sometime after 1087. The Feudal Book was a more detailed version of the Domesday Book, with a list added to it containing the names of the entfeoffed men of St Edmund and Abbot Baldwin (*feudati homines sancti Edmundi et Baldwin abbatis*).⁷⁶ These were important tenants of the abbey, often knights of a high status, holding land as tenants-in-chief and responsible for supplying the abbey with its military obligation of forty knights to the king.⁷⁷ Some of them were also, like the king's reeve at Onehouse, royal administrators managing estates escheated to the Crown or collecting the profits from the shire and hundred courts on the king's behalf. It is among this group that the abbey appears to have experienced its greatest problems in protecting its lands and franchisal rights.

The *De Miraculis* provides a number of narratives for the post-Conquest period of *invasiones* on the lands and rights of the abbey. A Norman courtier of William I's household attempted to annex a Bury manor adjacent to his own lands and received for this encroachment problems with his sight that were only partially remedied when he brought the offering of a large candle before the shrine.⁷⁸ The

⁷³ R. Fleming, *Domesday Book and the Law: Society and Legal Custom in Early Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1998), 402, no. 2934.

⁷⁴ For the thesis that the Domesday Book was primarily a massive *carta* guaranteeing title to land, see J. C. Holt, '1086, in J. C. Holt (ed.), *Domesday Studia: Papers read at the Nineteenth Conference of the Royal Historical Society and the Institute of British Geographers* (Winchester, 1986) (Woodbridge, 1987), 41–64. For a reading of the Domesday Book as a legal text, see Fleming, *Domesday Book*, 11–85.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 61, for the heavier reliance of the abbot on oral testimony in the absence of royal writs.

⁷⁶ *Feudal Documents*, ed. Douglas, 23–4.

⁷⁷ S. Harvey, 'The Knight and the Knight's Fee in England', pp. 49 (1970), 12–13. For the strategic reasons behind the abbey's relatively high *servitium debitum*, see Cowie, *Religious Patronage*, 70.

⁷⁸ Hermann, *De Miraculis*, 58–9.

identity of the courtier is not disclosed in the narrative, perhaps because his continued proximity at the time of writing made it a matter of delicacy.

Peter de Valognes held land as a tenant-in-chief in six shires, and was for a time sheriff of Essex and Hertfordshire.⁷⁹ His landed interests in Suffolk proceeded from a number of different connections. In Domesday Book he appears as a royal agent farming the *terra regis* in Samford hundred and a half.⁸⁰ He also held lands as tenant-in-chief in Great Fakenham, Ixworth Thorpe, Sapiston, Barningham, Wyken, and Westhorpe. In three of these villis, Great Fakenham, Ixworth Thorpe, and Sapiston, he claimed possession by personal gift of the king (in the case of Ixworth Thorpe, through the king from Queen Edith).⁸¹ Peter's closeness to the king is revealed in his foundation of Binham as a Benedictine cell of St Albans abbey. The lands at Binham had also been a gift of the king; the foundation made 'pro anima domini mei Willelmi regis'.⁸² Overlapping these holdings, Peter de Valognes held land as a tenant of Bury St Edmunds at Barningham and Sapiston. At Ixworth he was owed half the services of a man, the other half held by the abbey. In addition, Peter was one of the thirty-seven names appearing in Baldwin's feudal book and holding lands as one of the *feudatarii homines*, owing knight's service to the abbey.⁸³

From the calendar of royal writs belonging to the Conqueror's reign, two concern themselves with hostilities shown towards the abbey and its men by Peter de Valognes. Dated to the period 1066–87 they instruct, first, Richard fitz Count and Rloger Bigod, sheriff, to 'do the abbot justice against Peter de Valognes, and those men who have done him wrong', and, secondly, Robert, Count of Eu, Hugh de Montfort, and Richard, son of Count Gilbert, 'to release those men of St Edmund held

in captivity by Peter de Valognes, the abbot to have justice on him and all those others who have done him wrong'.⁸⁴

Another of Hermann's narratives provides us with the name of a second encroacher on the abbey's estates, Robert de Curzon. The Curzons held lands in the hundred of Blything, in the north-east corner of Suffolk. Their locations were within ten miles of Southwold, a village situated just north of the river Blyth on the Suffolk coast. The Domesday Book has Southwold in the possession of Bury St Edmunds. It consisted of a coastal strip, nine furlongs in length and five furlongs in width, a carucate of land and four acres of meadow—25,000 of the herrings landed at Southwold were meant to end up on the monks' table over the course of a year.⁸⁵

Robert de Curzon's attempt to take the manor of Southwold, according to Hermann, was frustrated by St Edmund, who raised a storm on the coast which scattered Robert's retinue and, along with Robert himself, drove his steward, Turolfus, and one of his knights, Gyreneu de Mouneyn, to madness. Robert had no direct connection with the abbey, although indirectly, through his lord, Roger Bigod, sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk, and one of Bury's enfeoffed men,⁸⁶ he may have contributed to some form of military obligation. Hermann describes Robert as a 'very rash and greedy man'.⁸⁷ He also reveals that Robert sought the permission of his lord, Roger Bigod, before undertaking the journey. Robert's decision to consult with Roger would tend to cast doubt over the extent of his rashness. It implies that he sought and acquired approval for his actions.

That Roger Bigod considered Robert's proposal reasonable, and that it may even indeed have been his own, might be inferred from the strategic role that Bigod played in Norfolk and Suffolk. Roger Bigod had custody of royal estates near the coast and many of his own estates were situated nearby. This has led Judith Green to consider him among a group of men whom the Conqueror entrusted with maintaining coastal defences and internal security.⁸⁸ Roger and Robert may already have seen action together when in 1075 Ralph de Gael, Roger of Breteuil and Earl Waltheof plotted against the king at Norwich, summoning in the

⁷⁹ In J. Green's table of sheriffs' landed income in the reign of William I, Peter de Valogne belongs to group D, receiving between £100 and £200 a year for his lands. See 'The Sheriffs of William the Conqueror', *ANNS* 5 (1982), 140. For Peter de Valogne's encroachment on the Chingford estates of St Pauls in London, see *DB*, fo. 12b, Essex and J. H. Round, *Domesday Studies* (n.p.l., 1888), pp. 539–41, 550.

⁸⁰ *DB*, fo. 286b, Suffolk, vol. ii.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* ii, fos. 365b, 420b–421b.

⁸² A. Binns, *Dedications of Monastic Houses in England and Wales*, 1066–1216 (Woodbridge, 1989), 63.

⁸³ As a tenant of Bury, the entirety of his lands were Honington, Packenham, Little Fakenham, Barningham, Sapiston, Bardwell, and Hepworth. See *Feudal Documents*, ed. Douglas, 23–4.

⁸⁴ *The Acts of William I* (1066–87), ed. D. Bates (Oxford, 1998), nos. 42, 43.

⁸⁵ *DB*, Suffolk, ii, fo. 371v, p. 1248.

⁸⁶ Hermann, *De Miraculis*, 79.

⁸⁸ J. Green, *Aristocracy in Anglo-Norman Britain* (Cambridge, 1997), 85–6.

process 200 Danish ships to East Anglia.⁸⁹ Robert de Curzon was certainly rewarded for his part in the episode, acquiring land previously in the hands of Ralph de Gael at Wisset, which he added to estates in his possession at Bridge, Brampton, and Uggeshall. Southwold was the nearest major coastal settlement to these lands and provided economic as well as strategic opportunities for the Curzons. If Roger was obliged to provide the abbey with a military retinue, then the pastures at Southwold might also be put to use in preparing horses fit for carrying a feudal host. Whatever the precise details of the Curzon's case, our monastic author obscures them with his conventionalized account of divine intervention on behalf of the abbey.

The Curzon family continued to inconvenience the monks of Bury St Edmunds by asserting legal claims to the land at Southwold on at least two occasions over the next century. We know this from the later version of the *De Miraculis*, attributed to Abbot Samson in the late twelfth century. The first of these two sequels occurred some time before 1168. According to Samson, the Curzons won royal letters (*litteras regias*) supporting their claim against the abbey. Their recourse to royal justice was frustrated, however, by the intervention of thieves, who, with the permission of St Edmund (*nec ut credatur sine martyris iusta sanctione*), stole the documents on the night before the family was to present them to the abbey.

During the third and final documented encounter between the two parties, Samson informs us that William Curzon, 'a descendant of the above-mentioned Robert', won royal writs entitling him to the manor of Southwold. On this occasion, thieves could not be relied upon to make off with the offending documents. St Edmund's intervention, as it happened, was more direct and decisive. The abbot sent his prior to London where, in front of no less than Richard of Ilchester, the 'truth of the matter' was explained and a written narrative of the first episode in this family saga presented to him. A delay in the proceedings was secured by these means, during which time William de Curzon fell gravely ill and dropped his claim to Southwold.

The tactics used by the abbey to arrest the momentum of the lawsuit relied upon the psychological pressure that St Edmund could bring to bear on the plaintiff, and more importantly, on the social group to which

he belonged. This consisted of his family and household and Richard of Ilchester, 'a man who had the king's ear'.⁹⁰ Abbot Samson's account reveals that William had married Richard of Ilchester's niece as 'a means of obtaining his assistance more certainly and firmly'.⁹¹ The retelling, before this audience, of the story of Robert de Curzon's failure to snatch the land in 1088, publicly raised the stakes of the dispute to a level that William could not match. The return journey from London through Essex and Suffolk saw William's descent into madness and his abandonment by his servants and, crucially, his wife, Richard of Ilchester's niece. The prior eventually intervened by offering William the chance to remember his offence against St Edmund and to show remorse for it by calling off his lawsuit. He left William to stew on the offer overnight and in the morning he returned to find a man at peace with himself, anxious to drop his case and show devotion to the saint.⁹² The Curzons appear not to have subsequently contested Bury's right to the land. In 1206 the men of Southwold arranged provision of a chaplain to serve the church of St Edmund there in exchange for payment of 3 marks a year.⁹³

It is apparent why Samson felt it appropriate to include this update of the story written earlier by Hermann. It reflects the powerful social influence the abbey could bring to bear, through the use of miracle narratives, in the moulding of social memory at a public level. Its message reprises an important theme employed by Hermann in his *De Miraculis* of a hundred years before. In St Edmund, the Bury monks had a powerful supernatural patron protecting their interests from those who would use royal bureaucracy to promote their own interests at the expense of the abbey's.

By weighing together the impressions given by royal documents and the Bury miracle narratives, it is possible to arrive at a profile of the social group whose common interests had a tendency to be at odds with those of the abbey. First, these men were landholders in Suffolk. Parts of their lands were situated in the eight and a half hundreds and therefore

⁹⁰ For his extraordinary career as a royal official see J. Hudson, *The Formation of the English Common Law: Law and Society in England from the Norman Conquest to Magna Carta* (London, 1996), 146–9.

⁹¹ Samson, *De Miraculis*, 149, 'spe certioris firmitatisque ducis parasidi'.

⁹² Samson, *De Miraculis*, 148–51; see *English Lawsuits from William I to Richard I*, ed. R. C. Van Caenegem, Seldon Society, 2 vols. (London, 1991), no. 446, pp. 479–81, for translations used in this paragraph.

⁹³ *Feudal Documents*, ed. Douglas, n. 131.

⁸⁹ ASC, DE, 1075, EHD, p. 157.

recorded in the Domesday Book as in the jurisdiction of St Edmund (*habet sanctus sac et soc*) and subject to the six forfeitures comprising the franchisal rights of the abbey. A proportion of men inhabiting their manors were likewise described as men of St Edmund. Through their status as *feudarii homines* some of them were in a special sense themselves men of St Edmund. But they were also in many cases the king's men, serving as sheriffs or farmers of lands escheated to the Crown. As royal ministers they gained opportunities for profit and status in excess of that which they enjoyed as local lords. The abbey's franchise, whose practical implications were rigorously defended by Baldwin, gave them little room in which to promote these interests.

It is within this context of tension between the abbey and a distinct class of men in East Anglian society that the writing of the *De Miraculis* and the event in which its narrative culminates, the translation of St Edmund's relics to the new church in 1095, must be understood. During the preparations for the translation, the rumour was circulated around the court of William Rufus that St Edmund's body did not lie incorrupt at Bury and that consequently the precious metal fittings to his shrine should be stripped in order to meet a military aid.⁹⁴ The Rockingham council of February 1095 provides the likely date for this recommendation and for the decision of William Rufus to allow the translation but rescind his earlier consent to the dedication of the church.⁹⁵ The presence of Edmund's body at Bury was the fundamental guarantee of the abbey's franchisal status. If serious doubt could be cast on this claim then the abbey's privileges could be undermined. A number of Domesday tenants-in-chief, holding in Suffolk, occupied important positions in the household of William Rufus. Godric, *dapifer*, was sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk in 1087 and appears in witness lists of many royal charters datable to the 1090s.⁹⁶ Ralph Baynard, chaplain to the king, held lands in Suffolk inhabited by men in the soc of St Edmund.⁹⁷ Others, including Eudo the Steward and Humphrey the Chamberlain, were men at court with lands in Suffolk. A final name that links this potential audience of evil and envious gossip (*malus et invidiosus murmur*) with its possible author is Peter de Valognes. Peter

witnessed a writ of William Rufus that can be dated to 1095, and appears in another two of c. 1087–97.⁹⁸

Few of these men were great benefactors of Bury, a number of them founding their own monasteries providing their families with independent sources of spiritual patronage and social support. Peter de Valognes founded Bingham c. 1087–93. Roger Bigod founded a Cluniac monastery at Thetford in 1103–4 and a Benedictine priory dependent on Rochester at Felixstowe during the reign of William Rufus. Eudo the steward founded Colchester for Benedictine monks in 1097.⁹⁹ Few among the first rank of the East Anglian aristocracy put Bury St Edmunds amongst their priorities as benefactors.¹⁰⁰

Soon after he completed it, Hermann found cause to add a number of extra stories to his miracle collection. These survive among the later collection attributed to Abbot Samson. They deal with apparent doubts among other sections of society about the incorruption of St Edmund's remains, and with problems faced by the monks in managing appropriate forms of access to the secondary relics of the saint. Two important characters whose lives feature in these stories are Tolinus, the sacrist, and Seietha, the daughter of a noble English family. In reward for her devotion to St Edmund, Seietha had been healed of a bad scarring she had suffered to one of her hands. After refusing to marry a wealthy and powerful man according to her parent's wishes, when her hopes of entering a nunnery were disappointed, she turned to the abbey for spiritual support. Of particular help had been Tolinus the sacrist, a venerable man whose life, nevertheless, was cut short by the punishment of St Edmund. The author of the story gives Seietha's account of the incident, taking pains to note that others, still alive at the time of writing, testified to its truth.¹⁰¹

Seietha had been troubled by the doubts a number of people had expressed about the incorruption of St Edmund's body. On the first feast of St Peter and St Paul (29 June) after the translation, she confided in Tolinus her frustrations at not being able to answer their doubts: 'I have

⁹⁴ Hermann, *De Miraculis*, 86: 'opusque fabrilis suo scrinio consecretum consiliarius est ad militare rapit stipendium.'

⁹⁵ F. Barlow, *William Rufus* (London, 1983), 207.

⁹⁶ See *RR4-N*, i, nos. 392–3, 398, 410, 413, 423, 431, 452, 459, 561, 462, 471, 478, 482.

⁹⁷ *DB, Suffolk*, ii, fos. 413v–415v, pp. 1277–9.

⁹⁸ *RR4-N*, i, 90, 95, 101; nos. 346, 368, 398.

⁹⁹ Binns, *Dedications of Monastic Houses*, 68, 72, 117.

¹⁰⁰ For the abbey's primary post-Conquest benefactors see Cornie, *Religious Patronage*, 71–9.

¹⁰¹ Samson, *De Miraculis*, 168; and see E. Van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe, 900–1200* (London, 1999), 52–3, for the apologetic stance of Hermann towards the use of female testimony.

rather spoken the truth according to vulgar opinion and common belief, and I am not yet fully informed by what more certain proofs I might oppose the deceit of the incredulous.¹⁰² In response, Tolinus assured her that he had seen the incorrupt body and had witnesses to this in William the prior, Sparhavoc his servant, and the goldsmith Hereward. Soon after, he fell and died of his injuries. His colleagues also died within the year. In a vision Tolinus appeared to a monk and told him of the time he spent in purgatory for his irreverent treatment of the body. After six months, the prayers of Seietha and his fellow monks won him a place in heaven. The story contains several interesting details, not least of which is a reference to the workings of purgatory, a likely addition by Samson to the original narrative.¹⁰³ The account also hints at the privileged role that goldsmiths played in the assistance of monastic cult promotion.¹⁰⁴ Seietha's relationship with the sacrist of Bury suggests that part of the abbey's links with the laity involved the support of high-status Anglo-Saxon women in their spiritual vocations, a function that has clear parallels in the patronage given to recluses by other abbeys at this time, the most famous example being St Alban's support of Christina of Markyate.¹⁰⁵

That there were those who doubted the incorruption of the body, following the translation itself, casts an interesting sidelight on the

¹⁰² Samson, *De Miraculis*, 169, 'Verum hoc magis iuxta vulgarem opinionem et communem fidem dixerim, necdum plenius edocta quo certiori argumento calumniis incredulorum possim refragari'.

¹⁰³ Samson, *De Miraculis*, 168–9. And see J. Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory* (Chicago, 1984), for an account of the growing importance of purgatory in the imagination of the 12th-century Church.

¹⁰⁴ For the case of a greedy goldsmith called Godmor, in the service of Burton abbey during the mid-11th cent, who kept for himself some of the fittings to the shrine of St Modwenna used to purchase grain during a famine for the people of the neighbourhood, see Geoffrey of Burton, *The Life and Miracles of St Modwenna of Burton*, ed. and tr. R. Bartlett (Oxford, 2002), 183.

¹⁰⁵ The evidence for Bury abbey's support of female religious is obscure, a Domesday Book entry referring to '28 nuns and poor people who daily pray for the king and all Christian people' among the town's citizens, *DB, Suffolk*, ii, fo. 372, p. 1248; also, see S. Thompson, *Women Religious: The Founding of English Nunneries after the Norman Conquest* (Oxford, 1991), 47; and see *The Life of Christina of Markyate*, ed. C. H. Talbot (Oxford, 1959), 51, 63, for a more famous English religious woman's rejection of a suitor on the grounds that she was a bride of Christ. Finally, see H. Mayr-Harting, 'Functions of a Twelfth Century Shrine: The Miracles of St Frideswide', in Mayr-Harting and Moore (eds.), *Studies Presented to R. H. C. Davis* (London, 1985), 199–201, for an explanation of this trend in the second half of the 12th cent.

ceremony as described earlier in the collection. Though participation in the ceremony was widespread, it appears that there were those who hadn't fully accepted its implications. That their doubts may have proceeded from a sense of exclusion from events is apparent in a second miracle narrative that indicates some of the problems attendant on the task of managing popular engagement with the saint's relics. A monk called Herman allowed an English nobleman (*quidam primoribus*) access to secondary relics of the saint kept in the crypt, so that he might show his devotion to St Edmund. When knowledge of this got out, a mixed crowd of more lowly people gathered, demanding to see the relics. Herman, who was a popular preacher, took the undershirt (*camisia*) of the saint to them and, in doing so, contributed to an undignified spectacle in which the relics of the saint were irreverently handled and damaged. A fellow monk called Edwin was visited by Tolinus in a vision and chastized for the incident. Herman died soon after. Both stories emphasized the dangers that could accompany more popular forms of ritual engagement with the relics of St Edmund that the translation had inaugurated. There were appropriate ways of channelling popular reverence for St Edmund and it was the responsibility of the monks to maintain discipline in their observance.¹⁰⁶ Already by the time of Baldwin's death, the abbey kept a display board in the church with which it could more conveniently educate the people of the town about the life of their saint.¹⁰⁷

Abbot Baldwin's production of counterfeit writs and charters, his survey of the estates of the abbey and, ultimately, the *De miraculis* provided the abbey with a concerted means of underpinning, rehearsing, and in some cases augmenting its franchisal and feudal rights against external threats.¹⁰⁸ The abbey history Hermann offers is one that reflects the values and concerns of a late eleventh-century provincial viewpoint centred on Bury abbey.¹⁰⁹ The narratives played out and resolved in the abbey's favour many of the tensions belonging to post-Conquest East

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 173–5.

¹⁰⁷ Hermann, *De Miraculis*, 84.

¹⁰⁸ See H. Cam, 'The Evolution of the Medieval English Franchise', *Speculum*, 32 (1957), 428–42, for the invention and inflation of franchisal rights in parallel with evolving state functions.

¹⁰⁹ See D. W. Rollason, 'The Miracles of St Benedict: A Window on Early Medieval France', in Mayr-Harting and Moore (eds.), *Studies Presented to R. H. C. Davis*, 77, for the 'provincial viewpoints' of successive hagiographers at Fleury abbey.

Anglian society. St Edmund was depicted as a royal patron, a politicized saint representing a people and protecting their interests against those who would usurp royal prerogatives in the region. The authority of the kingly saint by merit of his residence in Bury was inextricably linked with that of the abbey in the region and beyond it. Hermann produced a model of East Anglian society designed to encourage its people to look to Bury abbey for its authority. The imagined community of the ninth and tenth centuries was the logical precursor of the abbey's post-Conquest community, a community whose status became more clearly definable in legal terms by King Edward's grant of the Liberty, and which surfaces before the historian's gaze for the first time in the Feudal Book of Abbot Baldwin. The community saved from the rapaciousness of King Sweyn, Hermann implies, was the same one saved from drought by St Edmund on the day of his translation, his body carried to a high place among the people (*in plebis medio in eminentiori loco*)¹¹⁰ and prayers made for the advent of rain.¹¹¹ As well as extending the pedigree of the abbey's franchisal rights back in time through its inheritance of St Edmund's royal title, Hermann used his narratives to identify outsiders and to rehearse the punishments they might receive should they violate the abbey's material interests or trespass on its jurisdiction. Alternatively, he recorded the identity of those dynasties that succeeded in cementing their rule in the region and he linked them in direct succession to Edmund, king and martyr. The messages Hermann sought to convey were clear: for those living in East Anglia, St Edmund was their kingly lord,¹¹² exactor of dues and protector; for those who might attempt to contest this, and along with the bishops of East Anglia, we have identified a number among the aristocracy of Suffolk who had good reason to do so, the punishment of St Edmund was to be feared; and to new kings who might visit the region the message was: can you afford to cancel the subscription your predecessors made to the cult of St Edmund? Hermann's miracle collection was the keystone in Abbot Baldwin's campaign to enhance, consolidate, and protect the power and prestige of his abbey at Bury, particularly within East Anglian aristocratic society.

¹¹⁰ See Ch. 7 for thaumaturgical use of a relic at the top of a hill.

¹¹¹ Hermann, *De Miraculis*, 90.

¹¹² For the notion of the *dominus rex*, a juxtaposition of secular lordship and divinely sanctioned authority, emerging in Gregorian clerical thought see Jan van Engen, 'Sacred Sanctions for Lordship', in T. Bisson (ed.), *Cultures of Power: Lordship, Status and Process in Twelfth-Century Europe* (Philadelphia, 1995), 5, 203–30.

Hermann's miracle collection endured at Bury as a text that explained the origins of its authority over a distinctly defined community, and which recorded the resilience of that authority in the face of rival ones. Much of its content and the themes they illustrate remained intact and fundamentally significant to successive generations of Bury monks.¹¹³ But although it was placed by the shrine of the saint, the collection was not itself a monolith to be left untouched by subsequent generations of monks. Through the subsequent modifications and additions to the text, we can observe changes in its uses, both practical and aesthetic.

The collection's continued practical relevance to the Bury monks in the reign of Henry II is splendidly illustrated in Abbot Samson's story of William de Curzon, in which the prior representing the abbey at the court presided over by Richard of Ilchester read aloud from a copy of the story of Robert de Curzon's punishment by St Edmund for the same offence as that perpetrated by William. Another miracle pressed into use in a legal context in this way was the story of Herfast's eye injury, cited by the Bury commentator as evidence of the poverty of the bishop's case in the copy of the *Norwich narratio* mentioned above. A version of the miracles was also kept in the pulpit of the refectory for liturgical use.¹¹⁴

Samson's stylistic changes to the *De miraculis* reflect shifts in the usages of the text. His refinements pared down the text, replacing its earlier moral and rhetorical digressions with simpler, more direct renderings of the stories. The result was a version that sharpened the focus of its monastic audience on the social significance of the miracles rather than their historical correctness or on their spiritual function of edification in the meditative tradition of the *lectio divina*.¹¹⁵ Additions to the original body of the work were begun by Hermann himself. In these and other later additions to the *De Miraculis*,¹¹⁶ narratives that were superfluous to the dominant themes of its original conception can be observed, producing in outline the character of a different St Edmund.

¹¹³ An exception exists in Abbot Samson's omission of the dispute between Bury and successive bishops of East Anglia, particularly well documented by Hermann. See Hermann, *De Miraculis*, 60–7 for the amount of material omitted.

¹¹⁴ See R. M. Thomson, 'Two Versions of a Saint's Life from St Edmund's Abbey', *Revue Benedictine*, 84 (1974), 385–6.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* 399.
¹¹⁶ Four miracles appearing in Cotton Titus Aviii are attributed to Hermann in Bod. 240, but do not appear in the Hermann collection, Tibertus Bii. Thomson explains this in terms of a later redaction of Hermann not surviving.

Not all those of the knightly classes who had dealings with St Edmund were the subjects of his punishment. The more positive experiences of others helped to advertise the different kinds of support that St Edmund could offer to this section of society. Three of Hermann's narratives concern members of the knightly classes who were healed by St Edmund. Ranulf, a Norman knight who came over with William I as part of his household, was cured by St Edmund of a madness that overcame him. Later he became a monk at Bury.¹¹⁷ Edmund, the son of Ivo, a knight of Bingham in Norfolk, was cured of an illness of the eyes when he was taken, against the will of his tutor, a monk called Hermann, to the shrine of his namesake.¹¹⁸ Finally, William fitz Asketil, a knight from Herefordshire was cured of a fever after making an offering at the tomb of St Edmund and spending some time in the abbey's infirmary.¹¹⁹ These miracles helped to publicize the wider appeal of the cult of St Edmund to potential benefactors of the community.

Another growing role that St Edmund played in the lives of the laity was in protecting them from the dangers of long-distance travel. St Edmund was a supporter of pilgrimage abroad, particularly to Rome and Jerusalem. A Bury man called Wulfmar looked for help to St Edmund, his patron saint (*patrocinator*), when he fell into a trance after a pilgrimage to Rome. While in his trance the vision of a man appeared to him at first in the form of a dove, and told him to make an offering at the shrine for his recovery. Wulfmar offered some marble and a crystal that he had brought back with him from Rome and related the story of his trip to Tolinus, the sacrist of the abbey. Baldwin had the tale made known more widely among the laity, presumably to encourage them to bring back similar souvenirs from their trips abroad.¹²⁰ A group of pilgrims returning from Rome were placed in danger when their boat sprung a leak and began to sink. Two men of St Edmund's jurisdiction (*ambo de diuione patris Edmundi*), Wulfward, a priest, and Robert, convinced the others to place their trust in St Edmund and make a pledge of money for their safe deliverance. This was duly done and the

¹¹⁷ Hermann, *De Miraculis*, 75-6.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* 77-8.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* 74-5. An 'Asketil' appears holding 40 acres in Marden of the king in *DB*, Herefordshire, i, fo. 179v, p. 495.

¹²⁰ For the return of a Yorkshire knight from pilgrimage to Rome with a block of marble that was given to the monks of Durham, see Reginald of Durham, *Libellus de Admirandis Beati Cuthberti Virtutibus*, ed. J. Raine, Surtees Society, 1 (London, 1835), 154-7.

boat made it to port. A collection taken earlier on board was carried to Bury where it was offered to the saint.¹²¹

Two other stories were related to the monks at Bury on the same day involving St Edmund's saving of people at sea. The first involved Bury itself as the destination for the pilgrimage of an important French ecclesiastic, Abbot Lambert of Angers. Lambert told the monks that he had once prayed to Edmund for assistance when his boat had been stuck in port at Barfleur, on its way to England. An old monk of the abbey of St Nicholas, who had lived in the monastery for fifty years, had advised him to pray to Edmund in order that, 'the power of his moral excellence which brightly lights up England might be transferred through us to other parts of the world, and thus he may receive a worthy increase on account of his merits'.¹²² Lambert's successful crossing and its commemoration in the collection served to enhance the prestige of St Edmund in England by placing him in the company of saints whose power was known across Europe. The second tale was told to the monks by three London sailors, two of whose names were Yvo and Hervey. On a pilgrimage going by sea along the west coast of France as part of the route to Saint Gilles, they asked Edmund for assistance when their boat was caught in unfavourable winds. A fair wind soon prevailed and upon their return the men visited Bury, asking that their story might be put on record.¹²³

Before Abbot Samson turned his attentions to Hermann's text in the 1190s, Osbert de Clare had added his own series of narratives, providing us with a guide to perceptions of St Edmund's patronage in Anglo-Norman society. The details of Osbert de Clare's career are obscure. At the time of Abbot Herbert's election in 1121, Osbert was prior of Westminster. The episode seems to have been a troubled one, with Osbert at the heart of the controversy, probably over the issue of free election. As a result he spent much of his subsequent life in exile from Westminster. Osbert is most famous for his support of the cult of St Edward. His *Vita Sancti Edwardi*, together with his letters to various ecclesiastics and secular potentates, are the best known of his works. He also wrote a series of thirteen miracles of St Edmund that were later included in Cotton Tinus Aviii.

¹²¹ Samson, *De Miraculis*, 162-4.

¹²² *Ibid.* 177: 'ut virtutis eius potentia, quae regionem Anglicam clarius illustrat, in alias etiam mundi partes per nos transfundatur, et dignum pro meritis suscipiat incrementum'.

¹²³ *Ibid.* 178.

In these miracle narratives, Osbert's St Edmund lost many of his sterner characteristics and heralded a more pastoral approach taken on by those who mediated between him and his lay clients. In his letter to the monks of St Edmund, placed at the beginning of the second book of miracles in Cotton Titus Aviii, Osbert addressed to his audience a commentary on Exodus 28: 17, in which the virtues of St Edmund are likened to those symbolized in the gems found on the breastplate of Aaron. The making of Aaron's breastplate is part of the longer story in Exodus of the Jews' building of a tabernacle to the Lord.¹²⁴ The breastplate was to be worn by Aaron the head priest and his sons, each of the precious stones arranged in four rows of three on its front, inscribed with the names of the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel. Osbert's commentary draws its inspiration from Bede's *De Tabernaculo* in which the gems represent the four virtues, their arrangement in rows of three signifying their sanctification by faith in the Holy Trinity.¹²⁵ The breastplate was thus an outward reflection of the inner qualities required of those invested with sacred authority. Osbert's exposition of Edmund's fulfilment of this role draws upon early medieval conceptions of moral authority so fruitfully explored by Gregory the Great in his *De Regula Pastoralis*, and taken up subsequently by Bede and other commentators on the ministerial aspects of secular rule.¹²⁶ His application of Bede's insights take their cue almost directly from one particular comment of Bede, that

each of the stones is inscribed with the name of one of the fathers when the ruler searches out the life of the saints by careful investigation, considering how they are adorned with many works of virtues, and when he is eager to gather them all together in the hidden recesses of his breast by meditating upon them, and to bring them forth by putting them into action.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Exodus 28: 15–21; and 39: 8–14.

¹²⁵ Bede, *De Tabernaculo*, ed. D. Hurst and J. E. Hudson, CCSL 119A (Turnholt, 1969), 104–5; translation taken from Bede: *On the Tabernacle*, tr. A. G. Holder (Liverpool, 1994), 120.

¹²⁶ See R. A. Markus, *Gregory the Great and his World* (Cambridge, 1997), 27–8, for Gregory's discussions of the *rector*, and Matthew Kempshall, 'No Bishop, No King: The Ministerial Ideology of Kingship and Asser's *Res Gestae Aelfredi*', in *Belief and Culture in the Middle Ages: Studies Presented to Henry Mayr-Harting* (Oxford, 2001), 106–27, for later uses to which these ideas were put.

¹²⁷ Bede, *De Tabernaculo*, ed. Hurst and Hudson, 103; Bede: *On the Tabernacle*, tr. Holder, 119.

In his incorrupt remains, Edmund demonstrated that he had followed just such advice in life. The stones in turn represented: his martyrdom, his excellent virtue, the eternal vitality of his reward in heaven, his serene response to worldly illusions, his example as a light in an age of darkness, his suffering and resurrection whole in body, and firm in his renown as one of the elect.¹²⁸

Taking this cue from Bede, Osbert intended his monks literally to take these virtues to heart, citing 1 Peter 2: 9 in addressing them as 'a chosen people, a royal priesthood', and ending his commentary with the following passage: 'These precious stones signify the diverse virtues in which, as we believe, the virgin king and martyr was resplendent in body, and he left himself as one to imitate in the glory of his holy works.'¹²⁹

The place of Osbert's letter in the *De Miraculis* attributed to Samson, as prologue to the second book and before the account of Abbot Baldwin's completion of the church and translation of the body, is part of a subtle rearrangement of Hermann's collection, in which the lengthy account of the episcopal dispute is removed and the translation seen as the beginning of a more positive phase of cult activity rather than a response to the difficult circumstances of post-Conquest tenorial upheaval.

Instead of his depiction as the head of a community deriving its status from his militancy, St Edmund in the hands of Osbert takes a keener interest in the everyday moral conduct of his clientele and becomes the focus of a different, enlarged sense of community founded on priestly example and instruction rather than censure of the knightly and wealthy sections of society. Their places of origin included nearby villages and towns like Dunwich, Lindsey, Clare, Spalding, Copeland, the county of Rutland, and places further afield like Shrewsbury, Lichfield, Winchester, Southwark, and London. Most of the miracles were cures, though St Edmund protected the wider psychological and practical interests of his clients. Two of his narratives continued Hermann's theme of St Edmund as protector of pilgrims and sailors. The Bury monk Radulph encountered three sailors at the shrine of St Edmund

¹²⁸ Samson, *De Miraculis*, 154–5.

¹²⁹ Ibid. 154: 'Hi pretiosi lapides diverse significantur esse virtutes, quibus, ut credimus, virgo rex et martyr in corpore splendent, sequi nobis imitabilem in sanctorum operum fulgore decet.'.

who related to him their story of deliverance from a storm at sea.¹³⁰ A clerk of Lichfield told the story in the monks' chapterhouse of his escape from drowning in a shipwreck that occurred as he returned with others from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Just as St Nicholas was famous for helping sailors, he told them, so was St Edmund the patron of those shipwrecked at sea.¹³¹ This explicit comparison between St Edmund and St Nicholas recalls the implicit link made by Hermann, who puts the advice given to Abbot Lambert of Angers on travelling at sea into the mouth of a monk of St Nicholas, Barfleur.

In other miracles Edmund helped return lost or stolen money to its rightful owner. A knight of Copeland beyond York sent his servant to collect the dues owed to him from a diverse number of estates he held in East Anglia. The servant lost the money but regained it after praying to St Edmund.¹³² Another story involves the famous London merchant, Deorman, who had his purse stolen while visiting the shrine of St Edmund. After prayers to the saint, the purse was restored to its owner, the thief apprehended and forgiven by Deorman. Deorman was a powerful citizen and moneyer of London during the reign of the Conqueror.¹³³ He held land in London, Colchester, Hertfordshire, and Kent¹³⁴ and came to be the head of an important English family that moved in distinguished company during the twelfth century. Deorman's great-grandson, Theoderic, married a relation of the earl of Pembroke and was justiciar of London between 1148 and 1152.¹³⁵ Deorman was an important entrepreneur and financial adviser to William I. His striking appearance in the market at Bury is described by Osbert: 'A certain wealthy man from London, Deorman was present, who stood out among other businessmen, for the costly silk and splendid robes he wore.'¹³⁶

¹³⁰ Samson, *De Miraculis*, 193–5.

¹³¹ Ibid. 196.

¹³² Ibid. 186.

¹³³ P. Nihingale, 'Some London Moneyers and Reflections on the Organisation of English Mints in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries', *Numismatic Chronicle*, 142 (1982), 36.

¹³⁴ E. Miller and J. H. Hatcher, *Medieval England, Towns, Commerce and Crafts, 1086–1348* (London, 1995), 34.

¹³⁵ S. Reynolds, 'The Rulers of London in the Twelfth Century', *History*, 57 (1972), 354.

¹³⁶ Samson, *De Miraculis*, 183: 'Quidam praedives urbis Londonie, Deormannus affinis qui prae ceteris negotiatoribus in caris speciebus et sericis et cycalibus splendidus et egregius mercator effluat.'

Deorman died some time between 1093 and 1097.¹³⁷ Osbert notes that he cast his wealth aside to become a monk of Bury, a factor that helps explain the particular interest paid to him in the narrative.¹³⁸ He was a high-status convert to the monastery. Hermann did not include this story in his collection, though it is difficult to imagine him not being aware of it. That it may have seemed more important to Osbert may lie in his acquaintance with London sources for the story. Deorman's three daughters granted land to the abbey of Westminster between 1107 and 1115 for their souls and for confraternity with the abbey.¹³⁹ Osbert, who was prior of Westminster at the time, probably learnt of the incident through them.

For Samson, the story commemorated more favourable relations between the abbey and London merchants than existed in his own day. In his chronicle of the abbey, Jocelin de Brakelond describes a dispute between Abbot Samson and the London merchants over the latter's refusal to pay tolls at the market of Bury St Edmunds.¹⁴⁰ After a two-year trade embargo, Samson was forced to concede to the merchants' demands. The recollection of Deorman's submission to the authority of one of his predecessors must have given Samson some consolation in the matter and also protected the dignity of his saintly patron. From its earliest days, the prosperity of the market was intimately linked to that of the cult, a circumstance that is made clear in a story attributed to Hermann in Bodelstan 240, in which a man and wife visited Bury for the purpose of praying to St Edmund. That their trip also involved a walk around the market-place in Bury is revealed when the husband attempted to make an offering to the saint but found his purse empty. Retracing his steps through the market he found his lost coin shining out from a spot where it had been trodden down by the crowds. The story illustrates the profit to be gained from the formal links monks made between markets and the simultaneous celebration of the feast days of saints enshrined in their churches.¹⁴¹ In this case the story emphasized

¹³⁷ See *RR4-N*i, no. 399, p. 101.

¹³⁸ A 'Deorun' appears among a number of monks in a witness list to a charter issued at Bury some time in the period 1066–87. *Feudal Documents*, ed. Douglas, no. 268, p. 151.

¹³⁹ *RR4-N*ii, no. 1123, p. 131.

¹⁴⁰ Jocelin de Brakelond, *Chronicle of the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds*, ed. D. Greenway and J. Sayers (Oxford, 1989), 67–70.

¹⁴¹ See Ch. 6 for the story of the businessman punished for not showing his devotion at the shrine of St Frideswide in Oxford.

St Edmund's jurisdiction over the market and encouraged those with dealings there to pay a visit to the abbey.¹⁴²

The benefaction of Deorman that we might expect upon his entrance to the abbey is not recorded. The gifts of others in gratitude for miraculous cures experienced at the shrine are recorded in other narratives and in monastic and royal documents. Monastic benefactions could be in movables as well as land or rights in land. Osbert records the case of a Rutland farmer and a knight of Lindsey who chose to mark their encounters with the saint by offering livestock to the service of the monastery. The farmer of Rutland, whom Osbert notes had a habit of visiting the shrine of St Edmund, was taken to Bury by his wife and friends after suffering an attack of paralysis while in the field. After praying at the shrine he was cured and gave the animal on whose back he had been carried to Bury to the monks there. The benefits of religious devotion to St Edmund extended to individuals in their place of work, provided their families shared in that recognition of the saint's healing power. The knight of Lindsey, an honest and admirable man, devoted to the service of Edmund, was also struck down with paralysis. Edmund appeared to him in a vision and told him to make an offering at his place of rest. The knight's wife had him carried on a bier to Bury and on the way, at Hoyaland, he was cured. The price of one of the horses that had pulled the bier was subsequently given as an offering to St Edmund.¹⁴³

To these stories of the pilgrimages, devotions, and benefactions of the knightly and prosperous merchant classes, Osbert adds two stories touching upon the conditions of their souls. The companion of a rich woman cured at the shrine was a married knight with a fiery libido who had taken many concubines with whom he had carried out repeatedly shameful acts. He became ill and was horrified by the prospect of his impure body's decay. His fellow knight rebuked him for repeatedly violating the sacrament of marriage, and for offending his admirable wife and counselled him to repent. The wealthy woman also advised him to go and make confession in the church and the lustful knight did so, recovering health to his body and soul as a result.

Another narrative recounts the saint's direction of a knight away from the wicked desires of the flesh to spiritual sweetness. A man of the knightly order and holder of many estates in and beyond East Anglia was held in the grip of an ugly vice that reflected so badly on the health of his soul he felt himself another Lazarus. Hastening to the church with an uneasy conscience he prayed to St Edmund and prostrated himself before the shrine, groaning and confessing his sins. Osbert noted that the knight was henceforth freed from his temptation and added his own opinion that 'I think that the blessed martyr Edmund has rather resuscitated the soul from mortal sins than revived the body from mortal illness.'¹⁴⁴

This kind of miracle, in which St Edmund functioned as confessor to those afflicted with remorse for their personal sins, is a novel contribution to the miracle narratives associated with the saint. Together with his other narratives, they open up a perspective on contemporary society that shows a growing interest on the part of the abbey in the pastoral needs of those visiting the shrine.

The cult of St Edmund at Bury was the subject of hagiographical interest that endured throughout the period in which this study falls. A number of surviving collections of the miracles of St Edmund testify to their use by the monks of Bury in a variety of ways. Their contents provide highly revealing monastic-centred perspectives of lay society at different stages in the abbey's history. These perspectives had a propaganda function in identifying and defining imagined communities sharing priorities that were designed to make an impression on particular audiences. Hermann's collection of miracles propagated a number of perceptions of St Edmund that formed a blueprint underpinning the status of the abbey community at a time when it was being challenged by political, social, and ecclesiastical developments. These perceptions of Edmund, the ruler of a distinct people and jealous protector of royal rights located at the abbey, continued to be relevant to the monastic community, subject to stylistic changes and additions, for over a hundred years after their first circulation. Osbert de Clare's representation of Edmund extended his role as the head of a community, making him a forgiving saint, a priestly saint concerned about the moral

¹⁴² The narrative is absent from Cotton Tiberius Bii, but is attributed to Hermann in Bodleian 240 among a handful of others whose details strongly suggest their contemporaneity with Hermann's work. See *Novae Legenda Anglie*, 633-4.

¹⁴³ Samson, *De Miraculis*, 197-9.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. 205-7: 'ego majus existimo quod animam resuscitavit beatus martyr Edmundus ab operibus mortuis, quam si corpus resurgere faceret a dolore mortis'.

well-being of his people, and a saint who inspired devotion not from fear but through his ability to protect the interests of his people in their everyday lives. These new developments reflect an increase in perceptions among the monks of Bury of the extent to which the monastic community might be defined more widely in terms of its associations with the knightly and merchant classes that visited the town, its market, and church.

3

The Canons of Laon and their Tour of England

In 1112 a party of canons and laymen set out from Laon cathedral carrying relics of the Blessed Virgin Mary on a tour of central France. The following year they crossed the Channel and conducted a second tour around the south of England. The aim of both tours was to raise funds for the restoration of the cathedral priory. Its buildings had been damaged by the events of April 1112, when the citizens of Laon rose up against Bishop Gaudry in an attempt to assert communal rights that would reflect and protect their increasingly powerful economic interests.

The practice of touring with the relics of their saintly patrons was a new trend among religious communities of northern France in the late eleventh century. A particular kind of hagiographical travelogue accompanied the phenomenon, examples of which endure sporadically up to the sixteenth century.¹ Two accounts of the tours conducted by the canons of Laon were written, by Guibert, abbot of Nogent, soon after the uprising, and by Hermann, sometime abbot of Tournai, writing in the 1140s. It is likely that both works drew upon a common stock of living memory within the cathedral priory and among Laon's townsfolk.² Nevertheless, the preconceptions and priorities each author brought to his work make them different accounts. How the authors chose to preserve these memories in writing reveal contrasting perspectives on the phenomenon of touring with relics and consequently on

¹ For a bibliography see P. Héliot and M.-L. Chastang, 'Quêtes et voyages de reliques au profit des églises françaises du moyen âge', *Revue d'Histoire Ecclesiastique*, 59 (1964), 792-9.

² It is surely significant that the relic tours were the first cooperative enterprise between the town and the cathedral priory after the debacle of April 1112.