

**HISTORY OF, AND  
GUIDE TO, BURY ST.  
EDMUND'S**

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History Of, and Guide To, Bury St. Edmund's by H. R. Barker

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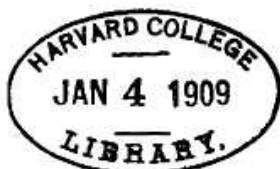
BY  
H. R. BARKER.

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*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.*  
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## P R E F A C E .

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**T**HIS little work aspires to no higher literary dignity than that of an *olla podrida* of various histories of Bury, more especially those of Yates and Gillingwater. It aims, however, at being somewhat more of a *Guide* in the proper sense of the word, than some of its predecessors ; and visitors to the town may, perhaps, find it useful in this respect.

It has been brought up to the present date, and among the more recent improvements and additions to the town, mentioned in its pages, may be noticed the series of stained-glass windows in St. Mary's Church (especially the Queen's window), the new Grammar School, Barracks, Post-office, County Club, &c.

The compiler has received much assistance from various gentlemen, to all of whom he begs to render his most hearty thanks.




ARMS OF THE BOROUGH  
OF  
BURY ST. EDMUND'S.



## PART I.

### DESCRIPTION OF BURY ST. EDMUND'S.

“BURY—Poor, proud, and pretty.”

T is probable that the Romans formerly had a station called *Villa Faustini*, or, the seat of Faustinus, on the site of the present town of Bury St. Edmund's; and, in Burton's Commentary on the *Itinerary of Antoninus*, it is supposed that this is the station described as situated 35 miles beyond *Camuolodunum*, or Colchester.

It appears tolerably certain that it was occupied by the Saxons, under the name of Beodricsworth, or Bedericsworth, the seat, villa, or mansion of Beoderic, or Bederic. One of the compilers of the Abbey Registers states that “Bederic was lord of the town, and appointed St. Edmund his heir”; and, in a Charter of Philip and Mary, the following account is given:—“Before the Conquest, Bederic was lord of this town: he was seised of the said town in his demesne as his fee, and being thus seised before the death and martyrdom of St. Edmund, he constituted St. Edmund his heir.”

About A.D. 925, the fame of St. Edmund having spread afar, the name of the town was exchanged for that of ST. EDMUND'S BURY, or St. Edmund's town; which has now been corrupted into BURY ST. EDMUND'S.

It is to the burial of St. Edmund's body at Bury, to the reputed miracles performed by the same, and to the establishment of the Monastery in that Saint's honour, that the town owes much of its fame and prosperity. (For accounts of the death and burial, &c., of King Edmund, see Part II. : *Legendary History of Bury*).

The town itself is built upon rising ground, at the bottom of which flows, on the East, the river Lark and its tributary stream the Linnet. The town is so well situated, and the air so salubrious, that it has been called the Montpellier of England. As a proof of the healthy state of the town, we may mention that of 306 deaths occurring here in the year 1884, no less than 43, or about 14 per cent. of the total, were of persons above the age of 75. Between the ages of 80 and 88, 22 deaths were recorded, being 7 per cent. of the total, and 4 persons exceeded the age of 91 years, the eldest being in his 96th year.\* These were all

\* *Vide* Bury St. Edmund's Medical Officer's Report for 1884.

inhabitants of the town. Bury is 14 miles from Newmarket, 26 from Ipswich, 43 from Norwich, and 29 from Cambridge. The Great Eastern Railway has here a junction, lines running from Bury in the direction of Ipswich, Sudbury, Thetford, and Cambridge. The streets, which intersect each other at right angles, are broad and well-paved, and the town contains a large number of handsome buildings, both ancient and modern. The population in 1801 was 7,655, and, by the census of 1881, the number was 16,211, residing in 3354 houses; an increase of 8,556 inhabitants in 80 years. James I., by Charter, conferred on Bury the privilege of returning two Members to Parliament, the two present Members being Mr. J. A. Hardcastle and Mr. E. Greene. Under the clauses of the new Redistribution Act, one Member only will be returned.

Under the Municipal Act of 1835, the Borough is divided into three Wards, the North, East, and West.

In Bury there was formerly a large woollen trade; a Clothier's Hall and Wool Hall being among the buildings of the town. St. Blaze being the patron of wool-combers, his day was an important festival.

Formerly three annual fairs were held in Bury; one on Easter Tuesday and two following days, for cattle, &c.; one on October 2nd and several following days, which were devoted to pleasure and the sale of furs, jewellery, fancy articles, &c.; and one on December 1st, for cattle, cheese, &c. The October fair was established in the place of St. Matthew's fair, which was held by Charter granted to the Abbot in 1272. In the 15th century, the Duke of Suffolk, and his wife, Mary Tudor, Queen Dowager of France, visited this fair, and had a magnificent tent erected on the fair-ground for themselves and their retinue. The Easter fair was granted by James I., who, in the sixth year of his reign, granted the other fairs and markets in fee-farm to the Corporation.


The LARK, which skirts the North and East sides of the town was made navigable to Fornham All Saints, under the powers of an Act of Parliament, passed in the reign of William and Mary, A.D. 1698. In 1817 this Act was amended by another, which placed the *navigation* under the management of about 80 Commissioners. The river is now much blocked by accumulations of soil and weeds, and is quite impracticable for the purposes of barges, which in former days passed to and from Lynn. Some amount of discussion has recently taken place as to the advisability of re-opening the river passage, but the matter is still in abeyance,



## PART II.

### LEGENDARY HISTORY OF BURY ST. EDMUND'S.

"so that this life of mine  
I guard as God's high gift from scathe and wrong,  
Not greatly care to lose."

 **K**ING EDMUND in 855 succeeded his uncle, Offa, as Monarch of East Anglia. The accounts of his life, and the various marvels connected with his death and burial, as recorded by Monkish writers, may have, in some cases, a solid basis of fact, but the tales reach us in such a confused and distorted shape, that it appears hopeless to endeavour wholly to disentangle and set them right. As, however, the rise and prosperity of Bury are intimately connected with many of these legends, it is almost impossible to write an account of the town, without, in some way, introducing them.

King Edmund's first biographer was Abbo Floriacensis, who, coming on a visit about 985 to St. Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury, undertook to write the life of the Saint, from the narrative given from memory by that Prelate, who had heard the circumstances related to King Athelstan by a very old man, who had been one of King Edmund's officers. We see here upon how slight a tenure are held the various legends which we are about to mention.

The particulars of Edmund's life, before he came to the Throne, are recorded by Galfridus de Fontibus, and the relations of these writers form the ground-work of the histories of all succeeding biographers. According to these, Edmund was the son of Alkmund, a Saxon Prince, famed for valour, wisdom, and piety. While the latter was on a pilgrimage to Rome, the sun was seen to shine with great brilliance on his breast. A prophetess considered this a happy omen, and promised Alkmund a son, whose fame should extend over the whole world. The Prince returned home, and the same year, his Queen, Siware, presented him with a son. This child, Edmund, is said to have been born at Nuremberg, in 841. Offa, who, at this time, was King of East Anglia, on his way to the Holy Land visited Alkmund, and was much struck with Edmund's engaging manners, and good qualities. On his return from Jerusalem, Offa was taken ill, and feeling his death approaching, called together his Council, and earnestly recommended Edmund as his successor. After