



St Edmund's, Bromeswell

WELCOME to St Edmund's – to a place where people have worshipped for over 1,000 years. Welcome to a living, working building, which is no mere museum or ancient monument, but which is still in regular use for Christian worship and prayer – the purpose for which it was first built and for which Bromeswell folk have used it down the centuries.

This is one of over 50 English mediaeval churches (including 20 in Norfolk and Suffolk) dedicated to St Edmund, King and Martyr (841-869), the young Christian King of the East Angles (Norfolk, Suffolk and the Isle of Ely), who was put to death for his faith by being tied to a tree and shot with arrows by the Danes - who had not at that time received news of the concept of Christianity.

Those who now use and care for St Edmund's are glad that you have come to see it. Please make yourself at home and enjoy exploring its beauty and living history, also the peace and ambiance of this Holy Place, made sacred by centuries of prayer and care. This little Guide will tell you something of its story and point you to some of its treasures. Please pray for those whose spiritual home this is and accept their gratitude for any contribution (however small) that you have left. All such will help our parish maintain this cherished and Grade 1 listed church, keeping it intact and beautiful for future generations to use and to enjoy.

BROMESWELL

Like most of our mediaeval churches, St Edmund's is the oldest building by far in the parish that it serves – an area of some 1,803 acres (2.8 square miles). The parish is roughly in the shape of an equilateral triangle, bordering Sutton to the south, Eyke to the north-east, whilst its north-western border is along the river Deben.

Its place-name may have signified the 'well', or spring, belonging to 'Brum' – or, more likely in this area, the hillside ('swell') where broom bushes grow. The main centre of its population, towards the northern part of the parish, is a tree-shaded village of narrow lanes and footpaths and picturesque houses, climbing the eastern ridge of the Deben valley, with its church set towards the top. Bromeswell has always been a small community; its population of 143 in 1801 rose to 226 in 1851 and 312 in 1971, but by 2012 had dropped to 260.

South-west of the village is Bromeswell Green Nature Reserve – an area of meadows, saltmarsh and wetland in the care of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust. The higher ground between the A1152 (to Orford) and the B1083 (to Sutton and Bawdsey) is Bromeswell Heath and is now occupied by Woodbridge Golf Course.

How Old is the Church?

The answer to this question is difficult because St Edmund's, like all old churches, has been modified and updated over the centuries as people from different ages and Christian traditions have altered it and left their mark upon it.

There is scant documentary evidence but we can gather some of the church's early history from what remains. For instance:-

- **In 1086** there was already a church in Bromeswell because it was mentioned in the Domesday Survey. Although it was probably a building of wattle and daub, it was almost certainly on what seemed to be the highest point of the whole village – where it still stands today. And the use of this site for some sort of “collective” or “ceremonial” purposes may well date back to the time of Raedwald – who is now regarded as the first “King of England”. Significantly (as we now know) Raedwald was buried at Sutton Hoo in 624, at the top of another hill overlooking the same river about 1½ miles from the church.
- The core of the present nave dates from about 1100. By then the conquering Normans had taken over most of what we now call “England”. And they were busily erecting dignified stone buildings in many key places. This was being done partly to show how great they were. But it was also because they were determined to show how Christian and devout they were. From this time onwards, the stone nave was already in place and its beautiful south doorway and a blocked Norman window have survived.
- **In the 1200's** there were two blocked lancet windows in the former chancel. They may well have inspired the design of the present chancel windows. – The Suffolk antiquary David Elisha Davy (1769-1851) who lived in Ufford and served for many years as “receiver-general” of the county, mentions these in his writings. The description of the south and east chancel windows suggests that they may have been put in, in or about 1300 whilst the retained priest's is somewhat earlier, from about 1200.
- As with so many Suffolk churches, much reordering and re-building took place in the **1400 and early 1500's**. That was a time when Suffolk was starting to grow rich from the wool trade with continental Europe and the River Deben was one of the most important rivers on the east coast. Ours was fast becoming one of the most prosperous counties of England. During this period the Perpendicular style of architecture developed. The nave windows appear to date from the early 1400's. The tower rose during the second half of the century. Money was bequeathed for that purpose in 1450 and was promised in 1460 - to be paid when the tower was completely finished – which it probably was around 1471 when money was left towards a bell to be put in it.. Finally, the present Tudor brick porch was built either in the late 1400's or early 1500's. Its stone windows appear to be earlier, these were possibly from an earlier porch, or perhaps from elsewhere in the church.

- The interior of the building was also transformed around that time. It was equipped with the beautiful font, very early hammer beam roof and several of the pew benches that we still use today. In 1526, Robert Marshe of Bromeswell bequeathed 6s.8d towards the gilding of the candlebeam, indicating that a newly-completed rood and rood-loft was ready for painting and gilding. So it was probably around this time that the rood-loft staircase was built in the south wall and strengthened by the brick buttress outside. The rood screen had become an essential feature in all churches before the Reformation. It formed an ornate partition between the chancel (which was the priest's responsibility) and nave (which was the congregations). The screen would originally have been surmounted by a rood loft, allowing access to the Great Rood, a sculptural representation of the Crucifixion, with Mary and John at the foot of the cross. By the time of the Reformation the church must have been a blaze of colour and carving. As late as 1532, Thomas More of Bromeswell left instructions 'to paint and gild the canopy over the sacrament by the oversight and mind of the honest men of the town, and my wife to pay for it'. This probably referred to the pyx-canopy – like the one still in use at Dennington. Two years earlier, the new Waghevens bell was shipped over from Belgium to ring out from Bromeswell's tower.
- During the 1500's (apart from the short period of Queen Mary's reign) the interior was transformed to cater for the liturgical requirements of the Church of England, 'by Law Established', with its emphasis on the preaching of the Word, its services and sacraments in English and its dislike of the old 'visual-aids' in colour and carving. The 1540's saw the removal by Law of the Great Rood and its loft, the replacement of the stone altar with a 'decent table', the replacement of the paintings which covered the walls with godly texts, and the banishment of gilds and chantries and so much of the church-life of 'Merrie England'.
- **The 1600's** saw the making of the pulpit and Communion Table in use today, also probably the furnishing of part of the nave and chancel with box-pews. More destruction took place around 1644 during the Puritan purge of what they regarded as 'superstitious images and inscriptions'. Their inspector, William Dowsing, does not record a visit to Bromeswell in his *Journal*, but doubtless the churchwardens carried out the required purge, which would have included the destruction of mediaeval stained glass, paintings on the rood screen (and maybe the screen itself went then) and defacing the faces on the font. The church authorities inspected the church in 1712, when 'Mr Commissary Raymond' ordered that the present Communion rails should be provided.
- Isaac Johnson's simple sketch of the exterior of this church from the south, made sometime between 1796 and 1818, shows the old chancel, but otherwise very little change from what we see today.
- David Elisha Davy, paid several visits to the church during the first half of the 19th century and his detailed notes tell us much about what the church looked like before the Victorians restored it. He observed in 1807 a copper-plate engraving of the Lord's Prayer fixed to the north nave wall. There were then three bells in the tower, the third bell, dated 1618, was cast by Myles Graye of Colchester. In 1823 he recorded that 'the largest bell has, by accident, been split and is now intended to be sold'. He carefully noted new headstones in the churchyard, including one to William Symonds, 24 years Drum Major of the Yorkshire North Riding Regiment of Militia, who died at camp on Bromeswell Heath in 1803 where a large military camp was established to garrison soldiers preparing for and training to fight in the Napoleonic War. The carving on the font, although well-preserved, was he wrote 'much defaced by whitewash'. This gravestone is located to the west of the Holmoak.

- Davy's description of the tower in 1844 includes the fact that while two of the belfry windows retained their original stonework, the others had been 'clumsily repaired of late years'. Davy's visit in December 1845 tells us much of the transformation effected during the late summer of that year, when the chancel was taken down and rebuilt from the foundations. Its walls had become so decayed and leaning so much out of the perpendicular that they were considered unsafe. The rector (who was responsible for the chancel) had paid for it, with the help of a donation of £50 from the Marquis of Bristol, who was then Bromeswell's principal land-owner. The lancet windows were described as being similar to the old ones. The floor was raised two steps from the nave, with a further step into the sanctuary. Each side of the chancel was equipped with 'a wide pew, parallel to the walls, of deal' with poppyheads at each end. The pulpit, which had been painted blue, had the paint cleaned off and, interestingly 'a small part of the old open screen, having been preserved, has been employed to support the reading-desk'. The eastern section of the nave was fitted with new seating, 'very low, with doors to them'. The rest of the nave was 'fitted up with the old oak seats, which are in a very decayed state'. Furthermore, 'a stove has been placed in the church – a present from an aunt of the rector'! We have yet to discover the identity of the architect and the builders who rebuilt the chancel. William Pattison of Woodbridge designed the adjacent rectory and it may well be that he also drew the plans for the new chancel. Davy noted that when digging the foundations of the parsonage house in August 1844, many skulls and human bones were found. Pattison designed several Suffolk rectories (including those at nearby Eyke and Melton). He also drew the plans for many local schools and the restoration of Little Bealings' and other churches.
- Sunday 30th March 1851 was the day of the Religious Census, when all churches and chapels had to make returns of the numbers attending services. That day Bromeswell (out of a population of 226) had congregations of 34 in the morning and 68 in the afternoon, with an additional 44 young 'scholars' at both services. At that time there was seating accommodation for 78 in rented pews and 54 sittings free of pew-rent. The Holy Communion was celebrated six times per year, with an average of 18 communicants. It was noted that there were six 'dissenting families' in the village, mostly Baptists.

A visitor to a service in October 1859, reporting for the 'Suffolk Pulpit' series in the *Suffolk Chronicle* reminded his readers that 'little more than half a century since, 30,000 men were encamped upon Bromeswell Heath, while on the steeple of the church the arms of the semaphore telegraph were placed, to convey in their clumsy way the much-dreaded intelligence that Bonaparte had landed'. He was not impressed with the state of the church, noting that whilst it was furnished with benches 'which have the appearance of some antiquity, we think that this appearance is to some extent due to the action of dry rot' and adding that the interior 'has a very dingy and neglected appearance - the whole of the furniture from the pulpit down to the humblest bench is as dusty as if the place had been in the builders' hands well within an hour or two of the service'!

The congregation of about 85, including 30 school-children were treated to a written sermon by the Revd RH King 'with an almost juvenile profusion of adjectives and prettily-turned sentences'.

In 1906, a faculty was granted to remove a wooden screen from the west end of the church, to erect the Revd Attwood's memorial tablet and to insert the glass panel in the priest's door. The architect Edward Fernley Bisshopp also recommended a thorough restoration of the roof. Presumably this later took place and it may have been then that the roof received its effective sky-lights.

The Venerable James Darling, Archdeacon of Suffolk, rector of Eyke since 1893 and of Bromeswell 1933-39, was a skilled woodcarver who set up a woodcarving school for local people at his rectory. He was determined to replace the angels which the Puritans had removed from the ends of the hammer-beams in the nave roof in 1644. He duly designed the replacements in the 15th century style, but had only completed three out of fourteen before he died. Originally, they were destined for St Gregory's at Eyke, but they were too small so were given to Bromeswell. The Revd Patrick Ashton (rector 1966-87) had the original idea of replacing the rest in fibreglass. Messrs Irvine Martin (Plastics) Ltd of Martlesham duly made a mould of one of the Archdeacon's angels and eleven replicas duly took their places above the heads of Bromeswell's congregations in 1968.

Miss E.S.A. Phillips generously gave Bromeswell's Old Schoolroom to the Church Council in 1957. In 1982 it was sold and the proceeds, together with the results of a variety of fund raising efforts, financed the building of the new vestry and facilities to the north of the chancel, to the designs of David Williams & Associates of Church Street Woodbridge. The building was dedicated by Archdeacon Jeremy Walsh on 16th September 1984.

Exploring the Exterior

It is well-worth taking time to enjoy this church as a whole in its elevated setting, with the old Rectory beside it to the west.

We climb to the picturesque and cared-for **CHURCHYARD**, which preserves some headstones from the 1700s (mostly to the south-west of the church), including one near the porch to Elizabeth, wife of Richard Levett, where we read, '*A long affliction did I bear, / Physicians were in vain, / Til Christ did please to give me care / And free me from my pain*'. Across the churchyard to the furthest south-east corner is a large cross, facing south not east in the traditional manner. It commemorates a keen golfer and looks towards Bromeswell Heath, now the home of Woodbridge Golf Club.

Rising from the greens of the churchyard is the oldest part of the church which stems from the Anglo-Saxon era and the early days of Christianity on these islands. The lower part of the walls up to 3m are constructed mostly of chunks of brown septaria stone. This is our local building material, which was obtained from nearer the coast where it outcrops in a line between Orford Ness and the Naze. It was also used to construct Orford Castle. The use of this very friable material has caused the downfall of several East Suffolk church towers. These rubble walls of the nave were covered with a hot-lime render to protect the masonry beneath - as most Suffolk churches once were. The walls were re-rendered in 2023 and a new buttress added on the south side providing much needed support where the rood loft stairs worm their way up through the interior of the ancient wall. The head of the walls were raised a further 2m using mostly brick, chalk and flint by the Normans in the 11th Century. The 1840's brick of the chancel contrasts with the mellow Tudor brick in the porch, while the elegant tower shows the skill of the 15th century masons in using flint.

The **NAVE** now has only two windows (both of the early 1400's) which face each other; the hood-mould (or dripstone - to deflect rainwater) of the northern one rests upon original carved corbel faces with open mouths. On this side is a blocked doorway of c.1300. The east end of the south nave wall is strengthened by a Tudor-brick buttress, because the rood-loft staircase is in the thickness of the wall here.

The red-brick **CHANCEL** was re-built in 1854, using the early English style of architecture (in use c.1190-1280) with single 'lancet' windows north and south and triple stepped lancets for the east window. The priest's doorway is genuine work of the 1200s, which was carefully re-set in the rebuilt chancel. 20th century brick is used in the **VESTRY** to the north of the chancel, which was added in 1984.

Bromeswell's 15th century western **TOWER** may not have the airs and graces of other mighty Suffolk towers, but is nevertheless a fine piece of design and craftsmanship. The plinth around the base, the diagonal buttresses which strengthen its corners and enhance its profile, and the parapet with its stepped battlements, are beautifully decorated with flushwork panelling in flint and stone. At the corners and in the tops of the battlements are the bases of the pinnacles which once adorned the tower and beneath the parapet on the north and south sides, carved gargoyle faces peer out as they throw the rainwater from the tower roof clear of the walls. Within the parapet (and visible from a little distance away), the tower has a tiled pyramid roof.

The two-light belfry-windows enable the sound of the bells to be heard throughout Bromeswell – their hood-moulds rest upon intriguing corbel-heads. A single cinquefoil (five-lobed) headed window on the south side lights the ringing-chamber below and a tiny window on this side lights the belfry staircase in the south-west corner of the tower. The west doorway has a fine arch and its original 15th century doors. In the flushwork panels flanking it each flint has been skilfully squared. Each side of the three-light west window above, mediaeval faces look out to greet us!

The south **PORCH** was added during the very late 1400s or early 1500s. It is built of slender Tudor bricks which have worn and mellowed with age. A careful look at the brickwork of the south face shows that the gable has been enlarged (or maybe simply re-made). Above the fine outer entrance arch is a trefoil-headed niche for a statue, also two splendid stone 15th century faces (the eastern one has a wimple), probably re-set here from elsewhere in the church. It may be that the two-light eastern and western windows have come from the nave (or from an earlier porch). Inside, the embattled cornices at the tops of the walls remain from the original roof.

For at least 500 years this porch has sheltered the Norman south doorway, which may well be 400 years older still. Its semi-circular arch is embellished with chevron (zig-zag) ornament, with an outer band of billet (little half-cylinders) moulding. In the stonework of the south jamb (side) are faint scratchings, including a pilgrim cross and what may have been part of a roughly-drawn mass-dial, which was used to calculate the start of services before the days of clocks. The door itself is also historic and has been opening and closing to admit worshippers and visitors for at least half a millennium.

What to See Inside the Church

St Edmund's worship area simply consists of nave and chancel, without even a chancel arch, but is colourful and cared for, with interesting craftsmanship from many periods, including our own. Its narrow width (only about 15 ½ feet) however makes it appear quite lofty and stately and the brick floors and the leaning nave walls add to its atmosphere.

With only two eastern windows allowing light into the nave, the opening up of skylights in the roof is a novel and effective 20th century way of admitting more light.

High above the simple **TOWER ARCH** is a small **SANCTUS-BELL OPENING** which gave the ringer of a bell in the silence chamber a view of the altar, so that he could sound a bell at the climax of the daily Mass, to enable those unable to be present to pause and join in prayer.

The **FRONTAL-CHEST** beneath the tower has the crown and arrows which are the emblem of St Edmund, the church's Patron Saint. This fine piece of craftsmanship was made c.1970 by Air Vice Marshall Bruce Robinson who, whilst living in retirement at Bromeswell, undertook a carpentry course. His reputation for being a perfectionist is very evident in his work here.

The **DOOR TO THE BELFRY STAIRCASE** is the original 15th century one. East of it, in the north and south walls are small square apertures, which look like holes which would accommodate a sturdy wooden security bar, but they are in the wrong place for this and their purpose is a mystery, especially as the southern one has a carved head, possibly from the 1100s, beneath it. The west doorway shows the great thickness of tower walls .

A narrow spiral staircase of 29 steps gives access to the intermediate 'silence' chamber, from which one looks up, through the original 15th century bell-frame to the tower's pyramid roof. There is much Tudor brickwork incorporated into the masonry of the tower's internal walls. Stored here are the remains of the boards with the Ten Commandments and the Apostles' Creed – probably those made for the new chancel in 1845.

A plaque on the wall of the Silence Chamber tells that the two **BELLS** were rehung in August 1933 to commemorate 25 years' ministry here of the Revd and Mrs Felix Shadwell. The treble bell, which is more often heard than seen, is perhaps the church's greatest treasure, as it was cast by Cornelis Waghevens in 1530 in his bell-foundry at Mechlin (or Malines) in Belgium. Set into its waist are four medallions, showing scenes of the Flight into Egypt, the Annunciation, the Presentation of the baby Jesus in the Temple and St Michael and the dragon. The tenor bell is even older and is thought to have been cast by Richard de Wymbis in the early 1300s and is therefore amongst the oldest bells in the county.

The crowning glory of the nave is its single-hammerbeam **ROOF** – a fine piece of 15th century woodcarving, design and structural engineering. We will certainly forgive you for lying flat on a pew, with your head nearest the central gangway, in order to appreciate its beauty without getting neck-strain! In a county which is rich in hammerbeam roofs, this one is rather simple, basic and steeply-pitched, so may be quite an early example. The cornices at the tops of the walls are carved with leaf-trail design. The 2nd pair from the east and the south-east angel were carved by Archdeacon JGR Darling, whilst the remaining eleven are fibreglass. These grey-coloured angels have shields emblazoned with the coats of arms of the families who owned the Manor of Staverton and Bromeswell down the centuries. A framed description of them hangs on the north nave wall. Higher up, the roof is further strengthened by arch-braced collar-beams.

At the nave's west end, near the entrance (symbolising our entry, by Baptism, into the Family of the Church), stands the octagonal **FONT**, where Bromeswell babes have been baptised for some 600 years. It is a beautiful piece of 15th century stonecarving, which has been remarkably well-preserved from Puritan iconoclasm - only some of the heads have been defaced. Around the stem are four lions with curly manes and on the underside of the bowl are eight angels with outstretched wings. The bowl panels show the emblems of the Four Evangelists: the winged Lion of St Mark (south-west); the Angel of St Matthew (south-east); the winged Ox of St Luke (north-east) and the Eagle of St John (north-west). These alternate with angels bearing shields, upon which are

carved a flower (south), and three things used in Baptism; a stole (west), an open book (north) and what may well be a chrismatory for Holy Oil (east). In the top of the bowl are traces of ironwork by which a lid or cover was locked to the font to prevent theft of the Holy Water for magical purposes. The font lid, with its inlaid cross, is another example of Air Vice Marshall Robinson's superb carpentry.

On the north wall nearby a few early 19th century **HAT-PEGS** may be seen. The little **ORGAN**, by the Positive Organ Company was installed in 1953. Further east is the blocked internal splay of the former **NORMAN SLIT WINDOW**. Externally the window would have been small, but it had a wide splay through the wall to admit light and air. It now frames the Portland stone **WAR MEMORIAL PLAQUE**, recording seven Bromeswell men who lost their lives in World War 1 and nine in World War 2. This was made in 1949 by Messrs Saunders of Hadleigh Road, Ipswich, to the designs of Eric Sandon. An illuminated **ROLL OF HONOUR**, recording those who served in the Great War, hangs next to the war memorial. 19th century wooden wainscoting lines the lower parts of the walls.

The **SEATING** in the nave is mostly 15th century benches with a mixture of styles of poppyhead ends, also a few 19th century imitations in the front. The mediaeval woodwork is now very worn and decayed with age, but what remains of some of the figures is worth examining. Interestingly, a look beneath the bookrests of most of these benches shows the re-use of panelling from the 17th and 18th century box-pews to fill the spaces between the seats and the floor.

The handsome **PULPIT** has characteristic woodcarving from the late 1600s, with lozenge and round-headed arch patterns. Once part of a three-decker, it now has a later 'wine-glass' stem. The odd little recess cut into the wall behind it is a mystery.

In the south wall opposite is the doorway and upper entrance to the **ROOD-LOFT STAIRCASE**, which ascended through the thickness of the wall to the rood loft, or walkway above the former rood-screen, enabling people to tend the candles which burned before the great Rood (Christ crucified, with his Mother and St John at the foot of the cross). Roods and their lofts were destroyed by the Reformers in the 1540s and evidence of the staircase is all that we have left to remind us of the beautiful rood-complex (screen, loft and Rood) which filled the division between the chancel and the nave. The quality of the screen's woodcarving would be similar to that in the **LECTERN** nearby and this may well incorporate fragments of the old screen-work mentioned by Davy.

Two steps lead into the **CHANCEL**, which structurally is entirely work of 1845. The chancel **STALLS** are later; these have good poppyhead ends and that on the south side has an eastern door.

The **COMMUNION RAILS**, with their turned balusters, were those ordered to be made in 1712. Archbishop Laud in the 1600s directed that altars should be railed off so that 'dogges should not defile ye sanctuary'. The Communion **KNEELERS** were made by Mrs Bidy Robinson (the Air Vice Marshall's wife) and Mrs Joyce Green, who taught needlework and whose husband owned the cricket-bat factory in Bromeswell. Although its top has been renewed, the **ALTAR TABLE** is a fine piece of carpentry of the 1600s, with characteristic carved decoration and sturdy bulbous legs, has been the place where Christ's command to offer and share bread and wine in Holy Communion has been carried out for nearly 400 years.

The three chancel windows are filled with Victorian **STAINED GLASS**, which may well be the work of the Newcastle firm of William Wailes, portraying the following scenes -

East window – Jesus the Good Shepherd, flanked by the Blessed Virgin Mary (with her lily emblem) and St John (with his poisoned chalice). Above the figure of Jesus is the Pelican in her Piety, feeding her young with blood from her own breast – a poignant symbol of Christ’s sacrificial love for us and of his feeding us with himself in Holy Communion. Beneath is the Lamb of God emblem of Jesus. In the side-lights are the emblems of the Four Evangelists - the Angel of St Matthew and the winged Lion of St Mark (left), the winged Ox of St Luke and the Eagle of St John (right). The window is a memorial to Caroline, wife of the Revd Robert King, who was rector here 1844-70).

South window – Beneath an angel swinging a censer, are scenes of St Stephen being put to death by stoning and of St Barbara, with her tower emblem. A brass plaque on the sill tells us that it is in memory of ‘ABK 7th April 1872’. She was Adela Barbara, daughter of the Revd RH King, who died at Stewarton, Bournemouth, aged 24.

North window – The glass is now obscured by the vestry, although it can be lit from behind. A brass plaque similar to the previous one commemorates ‘RHK 31st July 1870’ – the Revd Robert H King, rector 1844-70. The glass portrays Jesus carrying his cross to crucifixion, above which is an angel and beneath is St Edmund, carrying a sceptre and arrow.

A brass **PLAQUE** (by J Wippell & Co.) on the south chancel wall commemorates the Revd Arthur Thomas Atwood, (a graduate of Brasenose College Oxford and the son of the Revd HAS Attwood, rector of Ashelworth, Gloucestershire) who was rector here from 1870-1905.

The **VESTRY**, added in 1984, provides a spacious meeting-room and facilities. A plaque on the wall tells us of Miss Phillips’ generosity in providing it. In the north-east corner is the parish **CHEST**, made in the late 1600s but originally probably for use in a house, as it only has one lock and not the three required for purpose-built parish chests.

The Rectors of Bromeswell

The list of recorded rectors goes back to the institution of Henry Chesterton in 1313. Most of the priests who succeeded him are known by name only, until those of the last 200 or so years, about whom we can discover a little more. They include –

1790-1838 - Charles COOKE His father, Thomas Cooke, was rector and Patron of Semer and Charles was his curate there until his appointment to Bromeswell in 1790. On his father’s death in 1793 he became rector of Semer also, holding the two livings until his own death on 23rd March 1838. His son, James was rector of Semer 1838-75.

1838-43 – Thomas Martin SYMONDS Born at Bury St Edmunds in 1796, he came here after curacies at Denford and Ringstead (Northants) and Elton (Hunts), and left for the parish of Adwick-le-Street, Yorks, where he died in 1859.

1843-70 – Robert Henry KING His father, the Revd and Hon. Richard Fitzgerald King, was rector of the Chesterfords, near Saffron Walden and Robert was rector of the nearby parishes of Elmdon and Wenden Lofts before his 27 years' ministry at Bromeswell.

1870-1905 – Arthur Thomas ATWOOD came here having been curate for 11 years at Burgate in the north of Suffolk.

1905-33 – Felix SHADWELL was 2nd Master at Sunderland High School, then curate at Finningham for nine years before his arrival here. He retired to Walnut Cottage in Bromeswell.

1933-38 – The Venerable James George Reginald DARLING After a curacy at Twyford, Hants, he was rector of his family's living of Eyke from 1893 until his death in 1938. He was a skilled and talented woodcarver, whose work may be seen in abundance in Eyke church and in other churches in the area, including the great west doors at Orford and three angels in the roof here at Bromeswell. In the 1920s he decided to pass on his skill and set up woodcarving classes for the villagers, attended by several local men and even a few women. In 1933, at the age of 65 and having also been Archdeacon of Suffolk since 1919, he took on the additional parish of Bromeswell, which he served until his death in 1938.

1939-40 – James Kemble SWINBURNE Canon Swinburne was 63 when he began his short ministry here. He had been curate at Leiston, Tannington with Brundish and Sprowston, then rector of Wilby (Suffolk), Rockland St Mary (Norfolk), Shifnal (Salop) and Whitton. He exchanged the living of Rushmere St Andrew with Dr Mahon and remained there until his death in 1947.

1940-56 - Joseph Shaw MAHON, LL.D. Before becoming vicar of Rushmere in 1926, Dr Mahon had served seven curacies in 20 years, at Whitley Bay, Exeter, Ashbourne, Stafford and in the Suffolk parishes of St Matthew's Ipswich, Harkstead and Sudbury.

1956-66 – Charles Brian Auchinleck DARLING The son of Archdeacon James Darling, Charles had a distinguished career in the Colonial Service, was made a Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George in 1941 and became the Chief Secretary of the East Africa High Commission. He then trained at Ridley Hall Cambridge and was ordained in 1952, aged 47. He was curate and then rector of Monks Eleigh and Chelworth before becoming the third generation of his family to become rector of Eyke. After 10 years ministering in Eyke, Bromeswell and Rendlesham, he lived in retirement at Fallow Hill, Bromeswell.

1966-86 – Joseph Patrick Bankes ASHTON After curacies at Cheadle and Caverswall and becoming the first vicar of Werrington (all in Staffordshire), Patrick ministered here for 20 years (and at Tunstall and Wantisden for 10 years), where he and Anna are still remembered with affection for the very active ministry that they exercised. During his time St Edmund's received its vestry and angels for its roof and much took place in the life of its parish. In retirement, Patrick was an honorary curate at St Mary's Woodbridge and was chaplain to the Seckford Foundation.

1987-92 – John Kenneth COTTON John began his ministry in the pioneering South Ormesby Group of Parishes in Lincolnshire and then led the Wrentham Group. After three years in Canada he was team vicar of

Sandringham and West Newton, then priest-in-charge of Assington, Littler Cornard and Newton Green, from whence he came to our parishes, with the addition of Alderton, Ramsholt and Bawdsey in 1989. He retired to Sudbourne in 1992.

INCUMBENTS / PRIESTS IN CHARGE / TEAM VICAR

1992-97 – Neil Douglas Gauntlett DEAR Neil served his curacy at Framlingham before coming here. He left to become a Chaplain with the NHS, and then priest-in-charge of the Worlingworth benefice, before retiring to Stanton.

2000-07 - Patrick Thomas Stewart KERLEY After curacies at Thorpe St Andrew and Wymondham, Norfolk and a period as team vicar in Great Yarmouth, Fr Patrick became team vicar in the Wilford Team Ministry, with responsibility for our parishes. He returned to Wymondham in retirement.

2008-2015 – Judith Marie ANDREWS Trained for teaching at Avery Hill College of Education and for the ministry by the Diocesan Local Ordained Ministry Course, Judith joined the Wilford Peninsula team in 2000 as an OLM, until 2008 when she was appointed team vicar, with Bromeswell as part of her responsibility.

2015-2018 - Janice Patricia LEAVER Janice trained with the East Anglian Ministerial Training Course and was ordained in the Peterborough diocese, serving her curacy at Desborough, Brampton Ash, Dingley and Braybrooke, before becoming team vicar in the Wilford benefice in 2009, based at Rendlesham. On Judith's retirement in 2015, she took Bromeswell into her care.

2018 - Present - Mandy REYNOLDS Mandy is originally from Leicester and moved to Islington and then Wembley. She was ordained Deacon at St Paul's Cathedral and served as Curate in Wembley, as an Army Chaplain for 10 years prior to moving to Suffolk where she was a Chaplain at Ipswich Hospital. In addition to being Team Vicar she is the National Chaplain for the Normandy Veterans Association.

Roy Tricker & William Notcutt

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