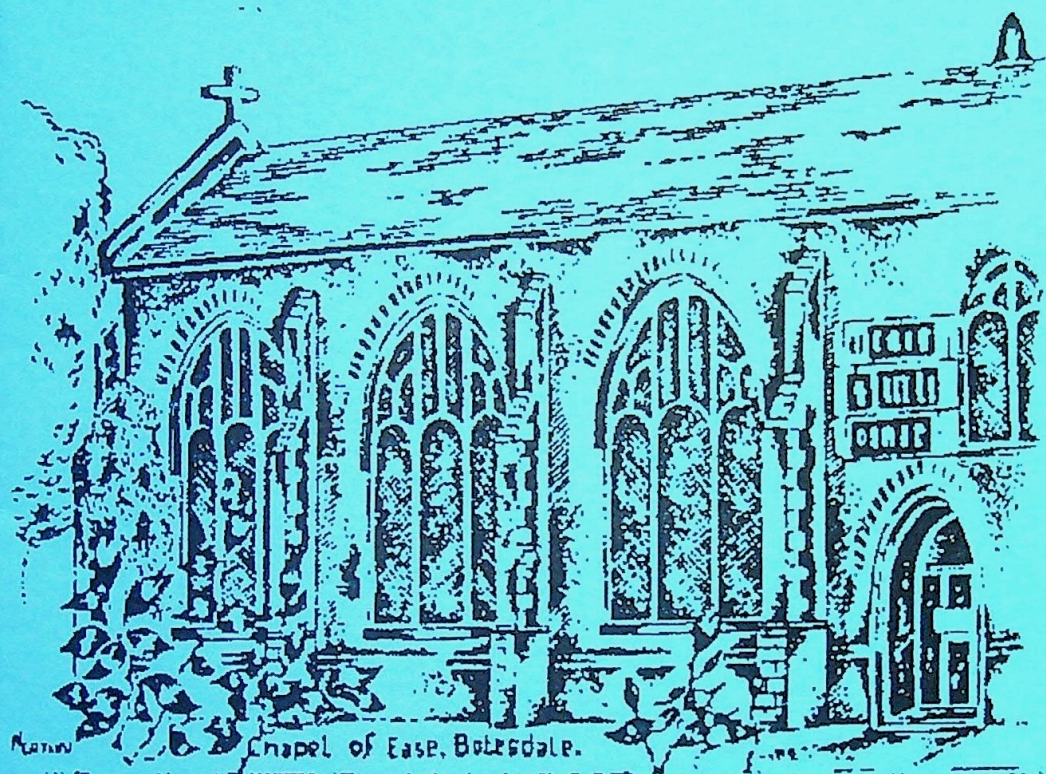


The Story of Botesdale Chapel of Ease



Price £1.00

THE STORY OF BOTESDALE CHAPEL OF EASE

“Preachers and Missionaries covered many miles on foot, ministering to the heathen and establishing churches. People lived in small settlements and it is likely that some of the traditions connecting local saints with particular places are authentic and that they did in fact land, teach, baptize and found churches in the various places where the claims are made”
[The early Church in East Anglia, Margaret Gallyon]

A LOCAL SHRINE

This small site has been sacred to St. Botolph for many hundreds of years and it is possible that its antiquity is as old as St. Botolph himself. He and his brother, Adulph, studied on the continent and on their return to England, St Botolph sought and received permission from Ethelmund, King of East Anglia, to found a monastery “*in the dark and dismal swamps*” of Icanhoe, now known as Iken, where he ruled as Abbot and observed the Benedictine rule.

St. Botolph was no recluse, no contemplative hermit sitting alone in his cell; he was a man of action, a man who wished to pass on his message of Christianity to all he met. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that he would have journeyed along the woodland path, the old A143, visiting the hamlets and scattered huts along the route.

The town of Bury St. Edmunds must already have been attracting pilgrims. Although the great Benedictine Abbey was to rise in all its grandeur many years later, apparently a small monastery was founded in 633, fifty years before St Botolph’s death. The

Architectural historians had dated the present chapel to the late fifteenth century due to the large Perpendicular windows which were probably inserted at the time the building began to be used as a chantry chapel, but we now know a chapel was in existence by 1338. The lettering of the inscription over the door has been attributed to Thomas Aldridge of Lopham in the 1480s.⁷ Robert Hamlyn, parson, left two service books for priests using the chapel, as well as money for the glazing of a window in 1505. The following year Richard Penn also left twenty shillings "*to provide a glass window in the new chapel at Botesdale*".

The fact that the Chapel of Ease had been used as a chantry chapel was unfortunate, as all chantries were dissolved in 1547, in the first year of the reign of Edward VI. It is not known if the chapel had continued to be used by the public but sadly it was treated solely as a chantry. The chantry certificate for Redgrave and Botesdale, dated 1546, states:

"that there were lands in Walsham and Wattisfield founded by John Shreve for 100 years. The Chapel wardens to pay yearly £5.6s.8d to the priest; to the Chapel wardens 3/4d; the rest to maintenance of repairs to the chapel. Present priest: Sir John Farrer, clerk, aged 53 years; he holds no other living. Yearly value £10. Lord's rent 7/10 ½. Stipend of priest 6/8. Rest to pay taxes etc. Repairs to chapel £4.6.1. The remainder now commonly bestowed on payment of taxes, and it is to be considered that the said chapel is an ancient chapel standing in Botesdale Street for the use of the inhabitants of the street. It was first built at their cost and had no land until the above bequest. It is now 1 ¼ miles from Redgrave. There are 46 households in the street, by estimation 160 houseling people and has liberty of market". (Chantry Certificate, Redstone, SIA 1906 Vol. XI110).

Although the inhabitants submitted a strong petition in 1548 stating that the chapel had been built at their own cost and for their own use as the parish church was one and a quarter miles away, the chapel and its possessions were seized for the king. At this time there was a silver chalice weighing six ounces, ornaments '*and other like things*' valued at 12s2d and a bell weighing two hundredweight.⁸ The number of chantries suppressed was nearly two thousand four hundred.⁹ The chapel was granted to Richard Fulmerston of Thetford and Sir William Fermor of East Barsham and included in a large number of properties which they purchased in Suffolk and Norfolk in 1549. Lead roofs and bells were reserved for the king, so that if the chapel had a lead roof it would have been removed at this time. The tower housing the bell was also removed at a later date and it is possible to see the outline of an archway into the tower in the west wall and a small window can be seen above the arch between the walls of the chapel and the Chapel House, only visible from the roof space of the Chapel House.

BOTESDALE GRAMMMAR SCHOOL

Sir Nicholas Bacon, Lord Keeper of the Seal to Queen Elizabeth the first, purchased the former Chantry Chapel from Richard Fulmerston and William Fermor and in 1561 was granted letters patent to found a grammar school by Queen Elizabeth. He was in a good position to do this as he had worked as a solicitor in the Court of Augmentations since 1538.¹⁰ This court dealt with all the confiscated lands, possessions and revenue of the dissolved religious houses. He had acquired the manor of Redgrave and built a large new hall in the parkland of the former Abbot of Bury's hunting lodge, completing it in 1554. The religious houses had provided some education until they were dissolved and the second half of the sixteenth century saw many new

schools come into existence endowed by the new gentry who had profited from the reformation by the purchase of church property. The official endowments of the Botesdale Grammar School are in existence dated 1577.

Sir Nicholas Bacon's school at Botesdale was one of the most important grammar schools of the sixteenth century. Its superiority was due mainly to the large endowment, twenty pounds for the Master, eight pounds for the Usher and forty shillings for repairs to the school house and premises. The chapel had been made into the schoolroom, a house built for the schoolmaster attached to the chapel, now known as the Chapel House, and a house for the Usher. The number of scholars was limited to sixty, and the sons of poor men were educated free. Within ten years of its foundation, the school was sending scholars to Bene't College, Cambridge (now Corpus Christi College). At the age of 13 the young Nicholas had obtained a Bible Scholarship to Bene't College himself in 1523, and he endowed £20 to the master and fellows of the college for 6 scholarships. Archbishop Tennyson, who died in 1715, endowed a further 20 shillings to the boys from Botesdale who obtained scholarships¹¹.

By Letters Patent dated 28th day of July 1561, a license was granted to Sir Nicholas to found a Grammar School, followed in 1576 by "*ordynaunces new made*" concerning the Grammar School, appointing two Governors, one from Botesdale and one from Redgrave, John Harvey and Richard Purditt respectively. Sir Nicholas "*and his Heires Male of his bodie*" nominated the schoolmaster, and the schoolmaster appointed his usher. The governors nominated their successors annually on All Saints' Day. In default of their nomination it was lawful for the Rector of Redgrave to appoint a successor within three days. The ordinance proved a problem as the annual change of governors

was a weakness and lack of continuity in the ordering of the school.

When one of the governors died or moved away from the village during his term of office, the remaining governor would choose the successor who would be from the same village as the governor who lapsed. There was to be a chest with two locks, and each governor would hold a key, which would be delivered to his successor when he ceased to hold office. All the documents, accounts, deeds and the seal belonging to the school would be kept locked in this chest.

There is a record that on the 1st November 1620, the two governors, John Bugg of Redgrave, weaver, and Thomas Weygate, of Botesdale, mason, received forty shillings due for repairs.

Inevitably, human nature being frail, these ordinances were ill-kept, and we read of problems in the late seventeenth century, as for more than fifty years the choosing of governors had been neglected. In November 1739, the Rector of Redgrave, Mr. Gibbs, exercised his prerogative and chose two new governors, but these never acted, and worse still neglected to choose their successors. However the Rector then appointed another two governors "*and are these Governors duly elected and empowered to act as well as if neglect had never been made in choosing.*"¹² The Rector also established the "*School Minnet and Account Book*".

The schoolmaster also neglected his office "*because for many years past he had taught none free, although he had received the salary of 28/-, taxes deducted from the possessors of the said Manors.*" There follows in the documents some heart searchings

as to the smooth running of the school which was evidently becoming somewhat lax in the administration.

Questions arose as to what should happen if the schoolmaster refused to teach literate lads sent to him from neighbouring villages. Could he be removed and if so, by whom? Who should make the fresh appointment – the Bacon male heir or the person to whom the estate had since been conveyed, the Holt family?

The money that should have been paid annually for repairs had been held back and the schoolmaster had made large repairs to which those responsible would pay only half the expenses. The governors would be enquiring as to whether they could recover any of the arrears. *“If they can it must be by Distress, or how otherwise?”*

The endowments for the school came largely from the manors of Stody and Barningham in Norfolk. At the time of the endowment the rents for the land would have covered the expenses, but as the costs increased at the school over the centuries the income was not sufficient to pay for them.

There were various orders concerning the administration of the school. Firstly that on every Sunday and holy day the scholars had to go to Redgrave Church for both morning and evening service, sitting together in the chancel or where the authorities should order them, and during the morning service they should repeat the Lord’s Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the following prayer:

“Almighty and Everliving God, which of thine omnipotence didst create mankind and after thine infinite mercies didst redeem him, graunte that, amongst the rest of Thy creatures

Sir Nicholas Bacon, Knight, Lord Keeper of the Greate Seale of England, the founder of the free schools in Botesdale, and the Lady Anne his wife, (Heare, after the death of the said Sir Nicholas and the Lady Anne his wife, place ye Christian name of his Heires Male and their offspring), may by the Assistaunts of thie Grace continually keep thie commandments and walk in thie ways during their abode there (which if it be thy will we pray to make long) and after this lief grant that, that thou haste to thy likeness in the said Sir Nicholas or in any of them wrought and of thie mercie so derelie bought may through the multitude of thie mercies exceeding all this works and all their wickedness enjoy the fruits of their creation and redemption for ever. Amen."

Every working day the Staff and the Scholars had to say the Suffrages, the Lord's Prayer and the above prayer on their arrival every morning, and every evening before returning home the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer and the Creed.

The school hours were from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. between Candlemas (2nd February) and Hallowmas (All Saints' Eve) and from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. during the winter months, with a two hour break, except Saturdays and half holidays when work finished at 3 p.m.

Poor men's children received preference over the wealthier, and all children had to be able to read when admitted. The consent of the governors had to be obtained before admitting any child, and the child had to be examined by the schoolmaster to assess his ability towards learning. This "learning" included knowing by heart the Articles of the Christian Faith, the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and "*such other things as concern Christian Faith and Religion both in Latin and English,*" and the children were examined every Saturday afternoon.

Breakage and damage had to be repaid by the friends of the child that did the damage. If they refused, the unfortunate child was banished from the school until reparation was made.

The wages of the schoolmasters were paid on the four quarter days. The Schoolmaster and Usher were not allowed to undertake other work *“that might withdraw them from dewing their dewtie dew to be done.”*

The following are *“articles to be recited to them that shall offer their children to be taught in school:-*

Ye shall submit your childe to be ordered in all things after the discretion of the Schole Master.

Ye shall find your childe sufficient inks, paper, penns, Books, candle for wynter and all other things at any time requisite and necessary for the maintenance of his learning.

Ye shall allow your childe at all times a Bowe, three shafts, Bowstrings, a shooting Glove and a brace to exercise shooting.

Ye shall see diligently from time to time that your childe keep dayley the ordinary hours and times in coming to schole, and if he shall fayle therein or be absent three days in a quarter without reasonable cause (as sickness) he shall be banished from the said schole.”

Although Sir Nicholas Bacon had set up the school for poor children the parents would have had problems in providing the equipment required, and this may have precluded some children

from attending, unless the equipment was paid for by the friends of the school. The same applied to the expenses at Bene't college.

There were also "*causes to remove scholemaster or usher.*

Firstly they shall be removed for any infective disease.

Item. If they or either of them be convicted of any notable crime as Whoredom, Drunkenness, Perjury or suchlike.

Item. If they or either of them do discontinue from ye Schole, leaving not such a sufficient Deputy as the Governours shall allow of and assent unto, or if by the assent of ye governours, the Scholemaster or Usher shall teach by Deputy alone Twenty days in one whole year or above Fyve Days at everyone time together (except it be by reason of sickness) they shall be removable for ye same."

These statutes were very similar to other schools in which Sir Nicholas Bacon was involved, namely at Bury St. Edmunds and St. Albans.

As well as the foregoing rules for the administration of the School a quintipartite indenture was drawn up which included instructions to the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, where he was to be buried. It also included payments to the Botesdale Grammar School of £20 to the Scholemaster, £8 to the Usher, and 40/- to the Governors for the upkeep of the school house and yard and the houses of the schoolmaster and usher. The rules regarding Bene't College were:

"The scholars have to pay 14d a week for expenses; 8d for the barber, 4d for the laundry, and to be allotted three lower rooms

on the west side of the court and to enjoy the same privileges as the other scholars."

Within fourteen days of a vacancy, one of the Fellows would go to the school and there, with the Schoolmaster and the "*Heir*," nominate a new scholar; the expenses of the Fellow to be found by the "*Friends of the School*". It was also laid down that when the position of Schoolmaster became vacant, it should first be offered to one of the six scholars or another member of the College.

The first headmaster of the school, Mr. John Bartilmew, was appointed in 1574. There is a record of a letter written by Sir Nicholas Bacon to his son resident at Redgrave, granting an extra month's leave to John Bartilmew and a buck when he commenced his MA. On September 10th 1577 and intermittently over the years, the record of payment to the six scholars at Bene't College is faithfully recorded, also the salaries to the Schoolmaster and the Usher. From this list a partial record of the names can be compiled.

The school flourished for nearly a hundred years, sending many boys to Cambridge. However its fortunes declined when Headmaster Sam Leeder became involved in a seditious meeting at Botesdale Market Place and drank confusion to King William. For this he was pilloried and lost his position. His Usher who succeeded him was little better and he was dismissed. The numbers had dropped to ten, when Samuel Maybourne was appointed in 1698. He was a man of great character and ability and soon raised the school to its former position. He was Master for fifty years and sent twenty three boys to Bene't College including three of his sons.

Few Suffolk schools can approach this record, and it is said that many boys left the school at Bury St. Edmunds to finish under Maybourne at Botesdale, showing that it was a superior school.

He disregarded many of the ordinances and took paying pupils to the exclusion of poor men's boys, until on the insistence of the parishioners of Botesdale the free scholars were reinstated.

Another headmaster of great character was the Rev. William Hepworth, appointed in 1791. He adhered to the ordinances, but widened the area from which able scholars could be drawn. The Rev. Hepworth was greatly admired by one of his pupils, John Heigham Steggall, when he wrote about him in his auto-biography 'The Suffolk Gipsy' describing him as a "*goodman who always encouraged cheerfulness.*" For thirty years the school flourished, until failing health forced him to close the boarding establishment, but he continued teaching six free scholars and twelve paying pupils having long been unable to pay an usher. On his appointment the school premises, sadly dilapidated, were repaired with the help of the inhabitants of Botesdale, who raised £150 for this purpose, and the Rev. Hepworth agreed to perform duty on Sunday evenings in the Chapel for a salary of £21 a year which appears to have been paid somewhat irregularly.

In 1841 his son, also the Rev. William Hepworth, took over as headmaster and settled the free scholar problem by sending the boys to the Rev. J. Haddock's "*commercial*" school in Botesdale and paying £20 per annum for them and received the rest of the salary and enjoyed the house and garden as a sinecure. He died in 1869. Haddock's successor, Mr. H.E. Laker was eventually appointed headmaster as the commercial school be-

came the Grammar school, but on his death in 1878 the school was closed.

Before the story of the school draws to a close it is interesting to note that there is plenty of evidence of the life of the school as the boys carved their names on any convenient beam or stone. The earliest inscription found is that of "William Sayer, aged 11, 1609" on the beam over the fireplace in the Chapel House.

For many years one of the school's oak desks, heavily carved in graffiti, was kept in Broom Hills the dower house to Redgrave Hall, but was moved to Redgrave Church several years ago when the property was sold.

PAROCHIAL CHAPEL

While the fortunes of the school declined, the little Chapel of Ease which had seen so much history, both ecclesiastical and lay, began to rise again as a place of worship and in the parish magazine for March 1883 we read of "*a most important event*" namely that the property known as The Old Grammar School was sold by private contract on the wishes of the Trustees and with the permission of the Charity Commissioners.

The property was divided into three parts:

- (1) The Dwelling House, Garden and Stables.
- (2) The Usher's House and a small strip of land.
- (3) The Chapel.

The first two lots passed into private hands, but the Chapel was conveyed to trustees to be used for Church of England services. The trustees expressed a desire that the Chapel be repaired and

enlarged and continue as a Chapel of Ease to the parish church in Redgrave. The trustees were Mr. G. Wilson, the Rector, Dr. Arthur Pearse, Mr Rowland Wilson and Mr Chas. Taylor.

In August 1883 the contract for repairs and alterations was accepted. Dr. Pearse and Mr. Taylor agreed to supervise the work. The windows were found to be in need of re-glazing and other small repairs advisable. The work that could be done would depend on the amount of money collected. The above trustees also agreed to collect subscriptions. The money was soon forthcoming and in the same month the contract for the new roof was signed.

Later in the same year five people agreed to restore the windows, namely four members of the Wilson family as a memorial to their parents, and Mrs. Pearse. This work was finished in 1884 and repairs to stonework and the addition of ventilators cost £7.15.6d.

The Chapel of Ease is a simple building with no separation between nave and chancel. The windows are perpendicular and there is a screen separating the entrance bay from the main building, which may be the original rood screen moved to a different position. The handsome oak panelling was presented by Mrs. Wilson in April 1888. This panelling came from Nunington Church in Yorkshire and was lengthened by a local carpenter, Mr. G. Orvice, who also carved the decorative top copied from carving in Redgrave Church.

The east window in the Chapel was given in memory of the Rev. William Hepworth, Senior, whose long service both as schoolmaster and priest was fittingly commemorated in this gift, and a

tree was planted by Miss Florence Pearse on the site of the Usher's house.

The old bell with the Bacon crest now rings out to call parishioners to worship as four hundred years ago it had called the cold and sleepy boys to school at 5 a.m. Sadly, because of danger the bell was taken down in 1962. It was restored and re-hung (November 1983) in its rightful position during Rev. D.F. Hayden's ministry and rings out once again before services.

The Chapel is now used regularly throughout the year for parish worship. The chancel area was re-ordered in 1982, the pulpit and two front pews were removed and the communion rail was made removable in order to have concerts and other events in the chapel, which lends itself admirably to these occasions.

The fortunes of this little building have come full circle, and a fitting close to this account are the words of the Rector in 1883 "*May God's blessing rest on all work connected with it*".

NOTES AND ADDITIONS

LIST OF HEADMASTERS AND USHER

	<u>Headmaster</u>	<u>Usher</u>
1574	John Bartilmew	Mr More
1579	Simon More	Ralph Barlowe (later went to Palgrave School)
1583		Steven Rushbrook
1583		Richard Holte
1586	Mr. Fowle	
1590		Daniel Gist George Swallows
1615	Nicholas Fowler	John Fowler
1619	Jonathan Slack	
1631	Nicholas Easton	Mr. Neave
1640	Mr. Neave	
1646	Mr. Ives	
1664	Mr. Loades	
1670	Mr. Locke	
1673-8	Mr. Paston	
1684	Mr. Leeds	
1684-91	Mr. Leader (Pilloried for drinking confusion to King William)	
1698-		
1752	Mr. Samuel Maybourne	
1743		The Rev. Price
1753	The Rev. Christian	
1762	The Rev. John Galloway	The Rev. John Smith.
1774	The Rev. John Smith	

- 1789 The Rev. Wm. Tindall (suspended within a year)
 1790 The Rev. Wm. Hepworth
 1841 The Rev. Wm. Hepworth, Junior
 (Boys were sent to the Rev. J. Haddock's Commercial school in Botesdale. His successor, Mr H.E. Laker was eventually appointed headmaster of the Bacon Grammar School until his death in 1878, whereupon the school closed.)

FAMOUS PEOPLE EDUCATED AT BOTESDALE

Robert Sayer admitted to Caius College Cambridge but not allowed to take his B.A. degree due to his papist leanings. He moved to Peterhouse College where he graduated B.A. in 1580-1. In 1588 he became a Benedictine Monk in the famous monastery of Monte Cassino and was professor of moral philosophy. In 1595 he was invited to the monastery of St. George in Venice where he died in 1602. (His name is also inscribed beneath that of his brother William on the beam over the fireplace of the Chapel House)¹³

Antony Gaudy whose father served in H.M.S. Revenge and who during his undergraduate days had assaulted the Dean of Caius College, Cambridge.

Sir John Fenn who edited the Paston Letters. 1739 – 1794¹

Edward Law, later Lord Ellenbrough, 1790 – 1881 Governor General of India and First Lord of the Admiralty.

Hablot K. Browne (Phiz), illustrator of the works of Dickens. Phiz was also a pupil at the Commercial School and was much influenced by the Rev. Haddock.

PROSPECTUS OF THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL 1774

At the Ancient Free Grammar School at Botesdale in Suffolk, 15 miles from St. Edmund's Bury, 12 from Thetford and 6 from Diss, a place remarkable for the pleasant and healthful setting. Young Gentlemen are genteely boarded and educated in the Greek and Latin classics; Geography and the Use of the Globe; with writing, Arithmetic and other useful branches of the Mathematics.

By: J Smith

N.B. French, Dancing and other Accomplishments taught, if required, by proper assistants.

THE BACON SCHOLARSHIPS AT CORPUS CHRISTI
COLLEGE CAMBRIDGE

In 1861 changes were made in the scholarships at Corpus Christi College, previously known as Bene't College, and the scholars were reduced to one who would receive the whole of the annuity derived from the estate and would be allocated a set of rooms in the College. The scholar would bear the name of Sir Nicholas Bacon's Scholar. The Grammar School representative would not be entitled to nominate, but the election would be made in the same way as the six Foundation Scholarships and the Bacon Scholar would be subject to the same rules, discipline and instruction as the other Foundation Scholars.

(ack. The Librarian C.C.C.)

NOTE: The wording of this statute seems to confirm that there were at this date some boys still in receipt of these scholarships (JKT)

THE LOCAL BACON EXHIBITION ENDOWMENT

This is now a recognised charity, which is registered with the Charity Commissioners and administered by a number of local trustees. The charity was set up with the proceeds of the sale of the school comprising the chapel and two houses in 1881. Grants are offered annually for students at secondary schools or in further education. They can be renewed to the same child and there are no strings attached as to how the money should be spent. There is no set examination, the child is recommended by his head teacher as one who is likely to benefit from this award. Children come from most of the surrounding parishes that were once part of the ancient manor of Redgrave.

REFERENCES OF THE LATE MRS. JOANNA TODD

Ipswich, Norwich and Bury St. Edmunds Record Offices.
Victoria County History of Suffolk
Town Library, Ipswich

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS FROM THE LATE MRS. JOANNA TODD

Dr. Wm. Cordeaux
Miss Mitchell-Innes
Mrs. Margaret Gallyon
Mr. Peter Northeast
The Librarian, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge
Mr. R. Powell (now deceased) Bacon Exhibition Endowment
Charity.

REFERENCES TO LATER ADDITIONS

- ¹ Calendar of Charter Rolls P.R.O. Ref. C53/18 Membrane 11. National Archives
- ² David Dymond East Anglian Studies Chapels of Ease and And the case of Botesdale p.59
- ³ Jenny Phillips, Selwyn College, Cambridge. Redgrave Court Rolls 16/05/1338 Court 30. University of Chicago
- ⁴ Calendar of Papal Registers, Papal letters, VI (1404-15) pp247, 362
- ⁵ Peter Northeast Translation of Norwich Wills 99 Wylbey 07/07/1447 n.r.o.
- ⁶ Audrey Maclaughlin Transcriptions of Walsham Court Rolls.
- ⁷ John Blatchley and Peter Northeast Decoding Flint Flushwork on Suffolk and Norfolk Churches.
Published by the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History 2005
- ⁸ David Dymond, East Anglian Studies p.62.
- ⁹ John Richardson, The Local Historians's Encyclopedia p190
- ¹⁰ Robert Titler; "Nicholas Bacon The Making of a Tudor Statesman" p.25
- ¹¹ The History of The College of Corpus Christi, 1753. p 206
- ¹² British Library Add 39222 pp 180-181 April 17th 1740
- ¹³ Compact Dictionary of National Biography p 1863
- ¹⁴ J. L. Dampier East Anglian Worthies p 76

This booklet was originally produced by the late Mrs. Joanna Todd in the 1970s. As a result of further research it has been updated. We have tried to keep as much of the original text as possible. Most of the additions have a reference number which has been listed.

Our grateful thanks to Noreen Bridge for converting the text into a booklet, to Nicholas Catlin for the cover drawing and Jean Wright for producing the cover.

Jean Sheehan and Bill Cordeaux.

2005

NOTES