

# ORTHODOX ENGLAND

*In this issue:*

*Momentous Changes*

*St Audrey of Ely,  
Mother of East Anglia*

*Holy Mother Eanswythe*

*The Decline of England 16:  
Edward IV (I)*

*and much more . . .*

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## Editorial: 1997–2017: MOMENTOUS CHANGES

### Introduction

**I**N JUST twenty short years Orthodox England has seen the international situation and the situations of the Church and the heterodox world utterly transformed. Time seems to have accelerated. For example, in 1997:

### International

Few outside New York had heard of the Twin Towers; countries like Iraq, Syria and Libya, though with tyrannical and dangerous leaders, were relatively prosperous and stable, and home-grown Muslim terrorist attacks in the UK, France and Belgium had not even been imagined.

The UK was still part of the EU and there seemed no hope that it or any other European country would ever free itself. Indeed, the naïve and impoverished countries of Central and Eastern Europe, understandably still in adolescent reaction to the terrible injustices of Communist oppression, actually wanted to join it.

As for the Internet, it was still relatively in its infancy and for the first three years of its life *Orthodox England* was typed on a word-processor (today's children do not know what that is) and until 2007 it was printed and sent through 'the post', still then relatively cheap. The vast amounts of information available on the Internet have made news and general information about Orthodoxy in written publications quite irrelevant, for now there are 'blogs', a word which did not exist in 1997.

### The Church Situation

Although clearly and miraculously reviving, in 1997 the Church inside Russia was still thought of as the Soviet-style Moscow Patriarchate. Although it was officially free of atheist persecution, it still had not canonized the New Martyrs and Confessors and was clearly captive to all manner of alien and renovationist influences, both inside and especially outside the old Soviet Union. Thus, since 1982, when we had first been informed of plans for it, we had been expecting the schism from the Sourozh Diocese in Great Britain, which only came in 2006.

As for the general situation inside the former Soviet Union, it was chaotic and looked hopeless.

The idea that the Russian President would one day be a practising Orthodox and be welcomed on Mt Athos as a new Constantine, as in 2016, or that the disastrous Russian Revolution would be widely lamented on its 100th anniversary today would have been mocked.

As a result of this paralysis of the Russian three-quarters of the Orthodox world, the gerontocracy that ruled many of the smaller Local Churches, many of them trained in Protestant Germany and England or in Roman Catholic Rome, was still largely captive to hopelessly old-fashioned ecumenism and modernism and thwarted all missionary efforts. The whole situation was delineated only in 2016 in Crete, when the modernists effectively cut themselves off from the Church and we plainly saw who was Orthodox and who was not, as apostates condemned themselves out of their own mouths.

The Church Outside Russia (ROCOR) was deeply divided about its situation vis-à-vis the ever-changing position of the Church inside Russia, though clear about the unacceptability of its strange and discredited representatives outside Russia. Nothing seemed clear, as different viewpoints were expressed and both parts of the Russian Church were in a state of generational change, flux and uncertainty. Only after the August 2000 Moscow Council had created the conditions for unity between the two parts of the Church, was progress at once possible, at last coming ten years ago in 2007. The old terms of 'Moscow Patriarchate' and 'Church Outside Russia' began to be swallowed up by the inclusive terms 'The Russian Orthodox Church' and 'The Russian Orthodox World'.

There was still hope that the majority of the Rue Daru jurisdiction would return from schism; instead, it wandered even further from the Russian Church into chauvinism and Russophobic politics with the new schism of 2006. We realized that no united new Local Church could be built on the sands of its adaptationist philosophy, as neither on the Halfodoxy of parishes in Finland, Estonia and the Ukrainian Diaspora, with which the Rue Daru group had always closely sympathized.

A future Russian Orthodox Metropolis for Continental Western Europe had been imagined by one or two of us, but no more, and as for the

building of a new Cathedral and seminary in Paris, that had certainly not even been imagined.

The dying ROCOR Diocese in the British Isles had been reduced to virtually nothing, largely as a result of its insistence on the use of the language of a disappeared generation and on sectarianism. It had no resident bishop and had no hope of obtaining one. Everybody thought that it was finished and that the lack of a resident bishop meant that it would eventually be closed down. Parishes and communities, apart from ourselves who would have become stavropegic rather than live in a modernistic Sourozh Diocese, would either die out or else transfer to some old calendarist sect.

Today ROCOR, an integral part of the restored and reunited global Russian Orthodox Church, is no longer the Russian Orthodox Church Outside the canonical territories of the Russian Orthodox Church based in Moscow, composed of the former Soviet Union, Japan and China. Notably, the Church based in Moscow has rapidly expanded its presence in south-east Asia, South America and especially Continental Western Europe.

Altogether there are now 900 churches outside Russia, many of them in the jurisdiction of the Church inside Russia, which a generation ago had been tiny. However, ROCOR still dominates in several parts of the world, notably in North America and Australasia, including territories in some way dependent on them, like Indonesia, Haiti, Puerto Rico or Costa Rica. Indeed, ROCOR is rapidly becoming the Russian Orthodox Church of the English-speaking world, of the Anglosphere. Even ten years ago that was not at all clear, but it is now. Divine Providence has acted here and guided us into doing God's Will.

Twenty years ago immigration from then Non-EU Eastern Europe hardly existed, let alone from Orthodox Eastern Europe. No-one thought that one third of small Fenland towns like Boston or Wisbech would be Eastern European. The idea that the largest Russian Orthodox church in the British Isles dedicated to our former Archbishop, St John of Shanghai, could exist with three priests in provincial Colchester would have been a complete fantasy and the idea that pilgrims from Saint Petersburg and Moscow would come and visit it regularly would have seemed absurd.

## The Heterodox World

Religion in the UK was not yet for the over-eighties or the ghetto: it still had a public role and there were still a few ageing but benign Anglicans who were at least interested in some sort of vague idea of Orthodoxy, though most of them had joined the ex-Anglican Antiochian Deanery by 1996. In other words, the old culture with its scraps and vestiges of Orthodoxy was not yet dead.

A gay bishop meant a happy bishop and nobody had heard of 'gay marriage'.

## Conclusion

Twenty years, less than a generation, on from 1997, we seem to be living on a different planet. Momentous changes indeed.

Given all these huge changes, after exactly twenty years, eighty issues and a million words, we have decided to stop publishing *Orthodox England* with this issue, in favour of a new generation of activities. Times have moved on. Having begun on the 1400th anniversary of the arrival of St Augustine in 1997 and ended in the year after the 950th anniversary of the so-called 'Battle of Hastings' in 2016, we have made our point.

Unlike as we were repeatedly told 40 years ago, England can be Orthodox – the proof. The mission of the Word and the defence of authentic, multi-national, and not nationalist, Russian Orthodoxy was launched. Now we come to action, to establishing new churches and building up infrastructure all over Eastern England. The time to prove our historical case is over. Now we act.

Having over twenty years presented our cause and values, that of an Orthodox England, that is, an England where Orthodoxy is inculturated but not compromised (for generations it had either not been inculturated or else was compromised), we have moved on to active pastoral building on the foundations laid. These for us are local to the whole of Eastern England as part of the long-awaited and at last reborn ROCOR Diocese in the British Isles and Ireland. This is now directly under Metropolitan Hilarion, whom we long asked to take over and who has doubled the number of its active clergy in four months. It was for this that we so patiently and bitterly fought, to create a diocese, truly local, but also truly part of the worldwide Russian Orthodox Church.

At this point, we would like to thank Eadmund Dunstall for his great work in editing and

formatting all 80 editions of *Orthodox England*, as well as writing many very interesting articles, and David Davies for posting each one. Without their invaluable help none of this would have been

possible. But we also wish to thank all our former subscribers and our present readers for their interest and look forward to seeing you on the orthodoxengland blog and elsewhere.

## From the Holy Mothers: ST AUDREY OF ELY, MOTHER OF EAST ANGLIA

**I**N the annals of the Kingdom of East Anglia (Norfolk, Suffolk and eastern Cambridgeshire), few are the figures that stand out as surely and as strongly as St Audrey of Ely. Who was she and what were her spiritual feats?

After the martyrdom in 634 of St Sigebert of East Anglia, the first English King to become a monastic<sup>1</sup>, and the death of his kinsman and successor Egric, there came to the East Anglian throne a most devout King, Anna. He was to reign for some twenty years, during which time his Kingdom did much to help the Church and support monasticism, both locally and nationally. Thus Anna helped convert King Cenwalh of Wessex, who was baptised by St Felix, Apostle of East Anglia. And Anna's brother, Ethelwald, stood sponsor at the baptism of King Swithelm of Essex who was baptised by St Cedd, Apostle of Essex, at the East Anglian royal palace at Rendlesham in Suffolk<sup>2</sup>. Anna was to die at the hands of the pagan King Penda of Mercia in 654. He was remarkable, however, not only by his own deeds but also by those of his six children, 'the Ely Saints'.

The first was St Jurmin, a son (though recently some have suggested a nephew), who like his father died defending the Christian Faith, in 653. Jurmin was venerated as a martyr and for long his relics were revered in the royal church at Blythburgh in Suffolk, where his father was also buried. Then they were translated to Bury St Edmunds, where were enshrined the relics of St Sigebert, who had become a monk there. St Jurmin is feasted on 23 February.

The second was an adopted daughter, St Sethrid. Given the scarcity of convents in England at that time, she left for Gaul, becoming a nun and the second Abbess of Faremoutiers, a convent in Brie. She reposed in 660 and is remembered on 10 January.

The third was St Ethelburgh, who succeeded her half-sister Sethrid as Abbess of the same Faremoutiers, reposing in 664. Her body lay

incorrupt and the local people came to remember her as 'Aubierge'. She is commemorated on 7 July.

The fourth child was St Saxburgh, who married into the royal family of Kent and had two daughters, St Ermenhild, Queen of Mercia, and St Earcongota, nun with her aunts at Faremoutiers. The elder daughter, Ermenhild, was the mother of St Werburgh of Chester<sup>3</sup>. In 664, after twenty four years of marriage, Saxburgh was widowed. She was made a nun by St Theodore of Canterbury and became Abbess of the island-convent which she had established at Minster in Sheppey in Kent, where she came to rule over seventy-four nuns. Later, leaving her convent to the charge of her widowed daughter Ermenhild, she went to Ely to live as a simple nun. However, on the repose of her sister, Audrey, Saxburgh became Abbess of Ely. She reposed in c700 and is feasted on 6 July. At Ely, as at Sheppey, she was succeeded as Abbess by Ermenhild who in turn was probably succeeded as Abbess by her daughter, Werburgh.

The fifth and most famous child, of whom we shall speak in detail below, was St Audrey, who founded and was Abbess of the island-monastery of Ely. She reposed in 679 and is feasted on 23 June.

The sixth and youngest child, St Withburgh, became an anchoress at Holkham in Norfolk. Such was her fame that Holkham became known as 'Withburghstow'. Then she founded a convent at East Dereham, also in Norfolk. After her repose in 743, when she was about a hundred years old, her relics were honoured first at East Dereham and then in Ely. She is feasted on 17 March.

We shall now turn to the Life of St Audrey, the most celebrated of these six children and Saints of God.

St Audrey was born in 630 on a royal estate in Exning in west Suffolk, about ten miles from Ely. She received the name 'Æthelthryth', meaning 'noble strength'. This name came to be pronounced first 'Etheldred', then 'Aldru' and, in the Middle Ages, more simply, 'Audrey'. It is this

latter form which we shall use<sup>4</sup>. Born then in Suffolk, Audrey most certainly knew Felix, Bishop of Dunwich and Apostle of East Anglia. Felix had come to East Anglia from Gaul in c 631 and worked with Audrey's father's cousin, St Sigebert. Consecrated Bishop by St Honorius, Archbishop of Canterbury, doubtless it was Bishop Felix who baptised and catechised King Anna and his family, including Audrey. Indeed Bishop Felix was to set up a monastery only a few miles from Exning at Soham. In 647 the young Audrey met the future St Hild, then aged thirty-three. She was visiting the East Anglian court but after one year returned to Northumbria at the behest of St Aidan to spread monastic life there. It was probably this visit that was to lead to an alliance between the Kingdoms of East Anglia and Northumbria. Indeed St Hild's sister, Hereswith, who would also become a nun at Chelles in Gaul and a saint, married one of Audrey's uncles, Ethelric. Their son, Aldwulf, was one day to become a fine King of East Anglia.

On 8 March of that same year, 647, the holy Bishop Felix reposed and was buried at his monastery in Soham. We are unsure who became Audrey's spiritual guide but it is clear that, zealous for the Faith, she was already strongly drawn to the monastic life. This, however, was not to be. In c652 she had to marry Tondbert, a noble of the South Gyrwe, the people dwelling in the East Anglian fenlands. As her dowry she received the Isle of Ely (Ely meaning 'the district or island of eels' from the abundance of eels there) on the very borders of East Anglia. This political marriage soon ended in c655 with Tondbert's death. This year was also that of her father's death at the hands of the pagan Mercians.

Audrey's marriage had not been consummated and she had remained a virgin. There followed for her five years of widowhood, during which she retired to Ely where she gave herself to prayer and the ascetic life, hoping to found a monastery in Ely. But this too was premature. In c660 Audrey had to marry once more – again for political reasons. This time it was to recement relations with the Kingdom of Northumbria by marrying Egfrid the King of Northumbria, then aged only fifteen. In this way Audrey, from being an East Anglian princess became the Queen of Northumbria, in much the same way as her sister, Saxburgh. For in 640 Saxburgh had become the Queen of Kent by marrying the King of Kent, Earconbert. The latter was the grandson of the first Christian King of Kent, St Ethelbert, and brother of St Eanswythe of

Folkestone, the first English nun. And in the same way Saxburgh's daughter, Ermenhild, became Queen of Mercia by marrying King Wulfhere of Mercia, thus opening the way to the Christianisation of that recalcitrant Kingdom.

Audrey was accompanied on her journey to Northumbria by her faithful steward Owin, or Owen, who was later to become a monk and saint at Lastingham and Lichfield under St Chad<sup>5</sup>. As Queen of Northumbria, Audrey gave much help to St Wilfrid of York, who evangelised Sussex. Notably she gave him land at Hexham to build a church and monastery. No doubt she was also a frequent visitor to the clifftop monastery at Whitby which had been founded in 657 by her aunt Hereswith's sister, Audrey's old friend, Hild.

As her husband grew older, he came to demand that their marriage be consummated. Audrey was opposed and sought the protection of the holy Bishop of York, Wilfrid. Finally with her husband's reluctant consent, in 672 she separated from him and left for Coldingham where her husband's aunt, St Ebbe, had founded a monastery. Like St Hild's monastery, this too was a double monastery with both monks and nuns. It was also situated on a North Sea clifftop, at a place now called after her St Abb's Head. Here Audrey was at last made a nun by St Wilfrid. The following year, 673, she was to travel south to East Anglia, returning to her beloved Ely. A legend from this period says that her husband, not yet remarried, changed his mind about letting her go and, pursuing her, was cut off by the high tide on the Humber. Another legend describes how, once across the Humber, she paused to rest at the village now called West Halton. Planting her staff in the ground, immediately it blossomed. This story is not to be taken literally but symbolically, as a token of Audrey's spiritual maturity and destiny. However it may be, for many years in the Middle Ages West Halton was known as 'Etheldredstow', the holy place of Etheldred, and the local church is still dedicated to her.

In Ely Audrey set about restoring and rebuilding the old church that had been founded there by St Ethelbert of Kent, perhaps at the directions of St Augustine himself, if we are to believe twelfth-century traditions. This church had been all but destroyed by Penda of Mercia. Here, like her mentors, St Hild at Whitby, St Ebbe at Coldingham and her elder sister St Saxburgh on Sheppey, Audrey set up a double monastery, where she ruled over both monks and nuns. Her example attracted



a great many, including her niece Ermenhild, who became a nun at Ely. Bede the Venerable records most of what we know about Abbess Audrey's life.

She lived in an exemplary way, a 'heavenly life in word and deed'. In this she was advised by her faithful priest, Huna, later to become a hermit and saint near Chatteris in the Cambridgeshire fens. Thus, giving up royal luxury, she never wore linen, but only woollen garments. Neither did she wash in hot water, except at the great baptismal Feasts of Easter, Whitsun and Theophany, and then she first helped the other nuns to wash, following the example of Christ Who washed the feet of His disciples. She ate little, only one meal a day, except at great feasts or in times of pressing need. Unless ill, she would remain in church at prayer from Matins until dawn, in other words from about midnight until six in the morning. The results of these ascetic feats were that Abbess Audrey obtained the gift of foreknowledge, prophesying the plague that would cause her own death and that of several nuns. This occurred in the year 679, some seven years after she had become Abbess. With her faithful priest Fr Huna standing at her death-bed, she thus 'exchanged all pain and death for everlasting life and health'.

Audrey was succeeded by her sister, Saxburgh. In 696, the latter decided to have her sister's bones exhumed from the wooden coffin in which they had been buried in order to place them in a stone coffin and have them translated to the church. Since there was no stone to be had in the fenlands of Ely, she sent some of the monks to row down the River Ouse to a Roman settlement called Grantchester. This almost certainly corresponds not to the present village of that name but to the present suburb of Cambridge called Chesterton<sup>6</sup>. There, 'near the city walls', they found 'a white marble coffin of the fairest craftsmanship with a close-fitting lid of similar stone. The monks took this as a providential sign and returned to Ely.

The day appointed for the translation, 17 October 696, came. An awning was raised above Audrey's grave and the monastics prepared to open the wooden coffin containing Audrey's remains. The brethren stood singing on one side, the sisters on the other. As she went with others to open the coffin and wash the bones, Abbess Saxburgh was heard to cry out in a loud voice: 'Glory be to the Name of the Lord'. She had discovered that her sister's body was incorrupt, 'as if she had died and been buried that very day'. Proof was given by the elderly monastery

physician, a certain Cynifrid, who had treated Abbess Audrey for a tumour on her throat three days before she had reposed. The incision that Cynifrid had made to drain the matter from the tumour had healed and only a scar remained. 'All the linen cloths in which the body had been enfolded looked as fresh and as new as the day they had been wrapped around her pure body'. It is said that St Audrey had welcomed the pain from the tumour on her neck and any pain of that kind as a punishment for her vanity when as a girl, she had worn 'the needless burden of jewellery' around her neck. She had come to wear 'a burning red tumour instead of gold and pearls'<sup>7</sup>.

The ceremony of the translation of the holy relics from the old wooden coffin to the stone one was retold thus by Abbot Ælfric of Eynesham: 'They washed the soulless body and wound it with all honour in new garments, and bare it into the church, making glad with hymns, and laid her in the coffin where she lieth until now in great honour for men to marvel at. At the ceremony several miracles took place. Firstly at the touch of the linen robes in which her body had lain for all those years, demons were expelled from the possessed and certain ailments were cured. Secondly the wooden coffin itself cured eye diseases and failing eyesight, when the faithful placed their heads on it. And thirdly it was found that the sacred body fitted perfectly the Roman stone coffin, as if it had been made for it, notably the place cut out for the head fitted the measurements of St Audrey's quite marvellously.

The Venerable Bede writing a few years after these events wrote the following of St Audrey: 'Queenly by birth she wore an earthly crown most nobly, but a heavenly crown pleased her more. Scorning the marriage bed, she remained a virgin wife for twelve years, then sought the monastic life. She came most pure to her heavenly spouse, virgin in soul'. And later Abbot Ælfric wrote of 'the English maiden who had two husbands and nevertheless remained a virgin'.

As a result of St Audrey's holiness, Ely was to become the great sanctuary of East Anglia until its sack by the Danes in 870. Of this event it is related that when one of the Danish warriors opened her coffin, thinking it to be a treasure-chest, and saw the intact body, he was fearstruck and fell down dead. Exactly one hundred years later, in 970, during the great period of national revival, monastic life was restored in Ely by charter of St Edgar the King and through the efforts of St

Ethelwold of Winchester. Once more Ely became a great centre of monasticism and industry and the twelfth-century book of Ely records the presence there of a Greek bishop during King Edgar's reign. Ely was especially famed for its school of embroidery and in the early eleventh century King Canute and Queen Emma much patronised it. The latter donating to St Audrey's shrine a purple cloth worked with gold and set with jewels. On one visit, at the Feast of the Purification on 2 February, the King, standing in the royal barge as it neared the church, was so delighted with the singing of the monks that he wrote a still surviving verse to commemorate the event: 'Merry sang the monks in Ely, when Canute the King rowed thereby. Row, men, near the land and let us hear the monks' song'.

After what may be called 'The First Crusade', the Norman Occupation of 1066, St Audrey's shrine became the last centre of English physical resistance to the Invader. Indeed it was perhaps only at this point that there grew up a consciousness of the national role which Ely had once played in the affairs of all seven English Kingdoms. After all under King Anna and his family the Kings and thus Kingdoms of Wessex and Essex had been baptized; through his daughters close contacts had been established with the royal houses of Kent and Northumbria; St Audrey had helped St Wilfrid to bring the Light of the Faith to Sussex, the last English Kingdom to receive the Faith; and finally through his grand-daughter St Ermenhild, the once ferociously pagan Kingdom of Mercia had been Christianised.

In Ely in 1070-1 under Hereward 'the Last of the English', there gathered forces which strived to withstand the Norman Invaders' unholy crusade to England. Thus St Audrey, Mother of East Anglia, became the champion of the native cause, her shrine the rallying point for the English resistance movement. Inspired by St Audrey's 'noble strength', Hereward's uncle, Abbot Brand of Peterborough, refused to recognise the occupier and Abbot Thurstan of Ely and his monks warmly welcomed Hereward and his army of resistance. All who joined Hereward's followers were obliged to take an oath of faithful service over the shrine of St Audrey and promise to labour with them 'body and soul'. *The Book of Ely* records how the soldiers ate with the monks at lunch and at dinner and Hereward sat at high table with Abbot Thurstan. Refugees and supporters gathered around Hereward. There came Earls Edwin, Morcar and

Siward, the Abbot of St Albans, Bishop Æthelwine of Durham and another Bishop, the much-respected Elder Osmund, a former missionary who may have been consecrated in Russia to set up a national church in Sweden<sup>8</sup>. The Invader's men met with great difficulty for 'the island (of Ely) was defended not only by its natural inaccessibility, but also by the patronage of the saintly ladies Audrey, Withburgh, Saxburgh and Ermenhild'.

When the Norman Duke through witchcraft and betrayal did finally enter St Audrey's sanctuary, it is recorded that, 'standing far from the holy body of the virgin, he flung a mark of gold onto the altar, not daring to come any closer for fear that the judgement of God might come upon him because of the wicked deeds which his followers had committed in the house'<sup>9</sup>. William had his revenge from Ely by demanding from the monks the payment of seven hundred marks of silver, a sum so colossal that the monks of Ely were forced to despoil the richly adorned images of the Virgin and the Ely saints. The Abbot of St Albans died of grief, Earls Morcar and Siward were imprisoned. Bishop Æthelwin solemnly declared the Norman oppressors for ever separated from the communion of the Church before he too departed for imprisonment in Abingdon where he was left to starve to death. Others had their eyes put out or their hands or feet cut off. But St Audrey and her sisters still defended Ely, notably from Picot, the Norman sheriff of Cambridgeshire, a notorious despoiler. Also from a certain Norman called Gervase, 'a mighty foe of St Audrey', who attacked and oppressed the possessions of the monastery wherever he could. In a vision he saw the Saint and her sisters Saxburgh and Withburgh and was struck down with a sudden heart attack. 'Fear of the Saint spread through all her neighbours, and for many years no noble, no judge, thegn or man of any note dared seize any possession of the Church of Ely - so manfully did the holy virgin protect her properties everywhere'<sup>10</sup>.

Throughout the Middle Ages, by virtue of the incorrupt body of St Audrey, Ely was to remain one of the greatest shrines in the land, a symbol of England's former spiritual greatness. In all, thirteen churches were dedicated to St Audrey: one each in Somerset, Shropshire, Oxfordshire, Lincolnshire and London, two in Hertfordshire and six in East Anglia. St Audrey was surrounded by miracles and was one of the most popular saints of the land, her name remaining a popular baptismal name long after the Reformation.



Although the shrine was tragically desecrated and destroyed by the men of greed in 1541, today, thirteen hundred years on since the revelation of St Audrey's incorruption, relics of the Saint still remain at St Etheldreda's church in Ely Place in London and her hand, still incorrupt, is conserved at the Roman Catholic church in Ely itself. And, visible for some twenty miles around, high above the surrounding fens and dwarfing the little town of Ely, still there towers Ely Cathedral itself. Built on the site of Abbess Audrey's monastery, it stands as a memorial to the witness of St Audrey's 'noble strength', that essential Christian Faith of the first millennium which Orthodox Christians everywhere are honoured to share with St Audrey, Mother of East Anglia.

Holy Mother Audrey, pray to God for us

1. On St Sigebert, see *'The Mystery of the Three Crowns' in 'Orthodox Christianity and the English Tradition', (OCET), pp.412-18.*
2. See *'St Felix, Apostle of East Anglia', OCET, pp.384-6* and *'St Cedd, Apostle of Essex', OCET, pp. 408-11.*
3. On St Werburgh, see *'Two Children of a Family of Saints', OCET, pp. 391-8.*

4. The form 'Etheldreda', which is often abbreviated to 'Ethel', is in fact an inaccurate Victorianism. Similar Victorianisms, often difficult to avoid, include 'Hilda' for 'Hild', 'Sethrida' for 'Sethrid', 'Werburga' for 'Werburgh' and 'Saxburga' for 'Seaxburgh'. Old English women's names never ended in a.
5. A memorial cross to Owin, originally set up in the nearby church of Haddenham, can be seen in Ely cathedral today. It bears the inscription: 'Grant, O God, Thy light and rest to Owin. Amen'. On St Chad, see *'St Chad, Bishop of Lichfield', OCET, Pp. 436-8.*
6. In 1952 similar Roman coffins were discovered at Chesterton. Lead-lined, they each contained a skeleton. See *'East Anglian Magazine', Vol. 13, No. 5, March 1954.*
7. On account of Audrey's youthful love of necklaces, in the sixteenth century the name 'Tawdry lace', i.e. St Audrey lace, was given to the fashionable lace and silk neckwear of the time. In the following century the poor quality of such neckwear gave rise to the modern meaning of the word 'tawdry'.
8. For the possibility that he may have wanted to establish a national church in Sweden with aid from Constantinople and Russia see, *'The Anglo-Saxons and the Christianization of Scandinavia', Lesley Abrams, p. 235 of Anglo-Saxon England, Vol. 24, Cambridge 1995.*
9. *The Book of Ely (Liber Eliensis)* ed. E. O. Blake, London 1962, II, 105 and 111.
10. *The Book of Ely*, II, p. 132.

## OUR HOLY MOTHER EANSWYTHE

WHO was the first Englishwoman to devote herself to the holy life of the nun? Who thus became the spiritual mother of all the English? The answer is Eanswythe of Folkestone. Who was she?

The daughter of Eadbald of Kent and his wife Emma of Gaul, Eanswythe was in fact the granddaughter of St Ethelbert (Albert), King of Kent, who had been converted by St Augustine himself. She would not, however, have known her grandfather, since Eanswythe was born in about 614. As a young girl, she clearly came under the influence of the English mission, St Laurence of Canterbury, St Mellitus of London and St Justus of Rochester, and no doubt her aunt St Ethelburgh. Her life records that she sought to serve God, 'treading underfoot the treasures of this world and, embracing holy teaching, she yearned with her whole heart for the life of the heavenly kingdom'. Indeed she refused to marry a pagan Northumbrian prince as was required of her by her father. Instead, it seems, she went to Gaul, perhaps to Faremoutiers in Brie, to receive monastic training. Then in 630, if this is so, she returned to her native land and on the cliffs of Folkestone founded a nunnery with the

blessing of St Honorius of Canterbury. Its church was dedicated to Sts Peter and Paul, a typical early English dedication.

This convent was the first ever among the English, and Eanswythe became its first Abbess, possibly with the advice and help of nuns from Gaul. It is written that it was the particular devotion of the nuns to give unceasing thanks to God for the blessing of the Faith so recently brought to the English land by her Apostle Augustine. Eanswythe showed great motherly care for the nuns under her and is said to have worked several miracles. Among these was the striking of a rock and finding a spring of water, also restoring the sight of a blind woman and the deliverance of one possessed by an unclean spirit. It was here that the so young Eanswythe lived in chastity, prayer and repentance, reposing on the last day of August, probably in 640.

Eanswythe's nunnery was later destroyed by Danish raiders, probably in 865, but in 927 its church was rebuilt by King Aethelstan. This in turn was destroyed by Earl Godwin (of Goodwin Sands fame) who plundered Folkestone in 1052. In 1095 a Norman monastery was built on the same site but



*St Eanswythe distributes loaves to the poor*

this in turn was lost when the cliff on which it stood was washed into the sea. However, in 1138 a little further inland a new church was built dedicated to St. Mary and Eanswythe. The relics of St. Eanswythe were translated here on 12 September of that year and this remains the date of the local feast to this day. Although greatly frequented by pilgrims in the Middle Ages, the shrine of the saint, now Patroness of the town of Folkestone, were hidden and lost at the Reformation. These were recovered during restoration work on 17 June 1885, when a twelfth-century leaden casket was found in the north wall of the church with relics of the virgin. These holy relics remain here in their casket for the veneration of the faithful to this day.

Holy Mother Eanswythe,  
Who ceaselessly gave thanks for the coming of  
the Faith of Christ to this land, as our Spiritual  
Mother, teach us now to do likewise and pray to  
God for the English land and all thy people!

### Short hymns for Saint Eanswythe (after the manner of Saint Romanus the Melodist)

Truly heirs of Thy mercy and saving grace are we,  
O Lord,  
Through apostolic labours, with noble pity and by  
selfless sacrifice,  
Thou hast revealed to us the True and Living Faith.  
Now with hymns of praise we cry out:  
Truly Thou art wondrous in Thy saints, O God.

Holy and Almighty is our God, who seest and  
knowest all things  
In the panorama of eternity all of creation has its  
part to play.  
Even the godless and the god-haters have their place.  
Evangelists and messengers of Christ took full  
advantage of the Roman Writ,  
Preaching to every nation in the known and  
charted world.  
For Thou art wondrous in Thy saints, O God.

Our land was numbered with the first to see the  
worship of the One True God.

Socrates, Stephen, Alban and Aule, by defying  
Diocletian, blessed our soil with martyr's blood.  
Freely releasing their souls unto Christ,  
Setting His seal upon our nation,  
And causing idolatry to crumble and the demons  
of darkness to flee.

Truly Thou art wondrous in Thy saints, O God.

Unknowingly the Roman Legions were the  
instruments of God.

And when imperial stability had run its course,  
Divine Wisdom brought the Ark to troubled times,  
To a Dark Age of disorder, danger and ungodly fear.  
In Kent, the flame of faith that had burnt brightly,  
flickered uncertainly and almost died.

Yet, through God's mercy in the half-forgotten  
West, Christ's Name was praised still,  
Thou art wondrous in Thy saints, O God.

A king was next in line to serve the Heavenly plan.  
When Ethelbert ruled in Kent, Christ's Name was  
heard once more, putting to flight the demons of  
idolatry,

Whom God, in His wisdom, suffered to remain  
hiding in shadows and in darkness, biding their time.  
For as soon as this good king was gathered to his  
fathers, their patience was rewarded,  
Bringing evil to the land and fear to the faithful,  
till a champion was found in the person of an  
apostle of impulse and action.

In all things,

Thou art wondrous in Thy saints, O God,

Reminiscent of the wolf in Christ's own words, the  
new king, Eadbald harassed the Kentish Church.  
If the demons of idolatry rejoiced to see God's  
sanctuary defiled; Imagine how they gloated  
when God's Holy Law was broken.

Eadbald ravaged his own father's second wife,  
confirming his own impiety.

But, polluted though he was by his vile sin, God  
sent his daughter Eanswythe as guide for his  
salvation.

Thou art wondrous in thy saints, O God.

Timorous bishops fled when pagan Eadbald  
assumed the throne.

Laurence of Canterbury was left alone, though he  
resolved to flee to Gaul. In agony of mind at  
leaving unguarded Christ's poor helpless sheep,  
The bishop prayed throughout that night in the  
Apostles church and, falling into fitful sleep,  
He was upbraided and rebuked by the Apostle  
Peter himself who reinforced his words with

pugilistic zeal.

For Thou art wondrous in Thy saints, O God.

Wounds red and sore were evidence of Peter's  
wrath as morning light clearly showed the  
violence of the vision.

Then the bishop Laurence, with apostolic boldness,  
Sought out the tyrant to confront him with this  
awful sign of Heavenly retribution.

The king would know what lawless act this was  
and trembled when he learnt that his own sin had  
angered God.

Grace stirred in his soul and, moved to bitter  
tears, in repentance he cried out

Thou art wondrous in Thy saints, O God.

O the wonder of this miracle that stemmed the  
rising tide of pagan power,

And brought King Eadbald to faith in Christ our God.  
When he was baptised, the angels sang and all in  
Heaven rejoiced.

The Church in Kent unceasingly praised and and  
offered thanks for this conversion,  
And even the infant Eanswythe's childish voice  
joined with this refrain:

Thou art wondrous in Thy saints, O God.

No idols did King Eadbald suffer to remain in Kent,  
As temple, grove and ring were swept away and  
demons banished to the realms of darkness.  
Just as when righteous Ethelbert did reign, the  
churches in glory shone once more.

The light of faith illuminated every soul,

And virgin piety was manifest within the king's  
own house,

For Thou art wondrous in Thy saints, O God.

Doubts then besieged poor Eadbald's wandering  
thoughts

His sister's suitor was the Northumbrians' pagan  
king.

At length he gave his blessing to the match and  
was rewarded for this act of faith.

When, after two years, Edwin was baptised and  
later, at the hands of Mercian hordes,

He exchanged his diadem for Christ's unfading  
crown of martyrdom.

For Thou art wondrous in Thy saints, O God.

Rapidly Eanswythe's fame spread throughout  
those isles as she grew in virtue and in grace.

No love of treasures, no craving for earthly  
power, no vanity or pride were found in her,

For she preferred to spend her time in holy works,  
in prayer and in study of the faith.

And from her earliest years, the child resolved to  
serve her Lord and God, in the virgin purity of the

cloistered life.

Thou art wondrous in Thy saints, O God.

Overruling these desires as childish games,  
Her father urged her to consider well the  
advantages of marriage.

But Eanswythe wavered not in her resolve,  
And chided Eadbald for his worldliness and lack  
of spiritual sight.

Yet he maintained that temporal concerns cannot  
be lightly brushed aside by those with earthly  
power.

In faith we cry:

Thou art wondrous in Thy saints, O God.

Unmoved by this, Eanswythe enquired, "Hast  
thou not heard of Mary,

Who chose the better part, which was not taken  
from her?

In human affairs the universal law of death  
prevails, but my thirst is for a Heavenly Spouse.  
For Him I do preserve the flower of my virginity,  
And for His service, I beg thee father, build a church".  
Truly Thou art wondrous in Thy saints, O God

Seeing then that she could not be shaken, the  
King gave orders,

For builders to construct on Folkestone's cliff, a  
house beside the church of Peter and of Paul,  
Reminding Eadbald of his conversion to the Faith  
of Christ,

And blessing thus the kingdom with its first  
monastic house of prayer,

As pious Eanswythe was soon joined by other  
virgins seeking nought but to give themselves  
entirely to the Lord.

For Thou art wondrous in Thy saints, O God.

Intently was the progress of the work observed by  
every rank,

As the streets of Folkestone echoed to the sound,  
Of masons and carpenters giving glory to our God,  
Labouring to build the saint a fitting house of  
prayer,

As a sanctuary and a haven of virgin piety,  
witnessing that

Thou art wondrous in Thy saints, O God.

Northumbria's prince arrived in royal splendour  
and bold confidence,

But his eyes observed activity in conflict with his  
mission,

For he had come, a suitor seeking Eanswythe for  
his bride,

And being not only of undoubted nobility, but  
valiant in honour and fair of face,

The king once more began to doubt the wisdom

of bowing to his virgin daughter's will.

Yet truly Thou art wondrous in Thy saints, O God.

The king, not out of weakness, then began to  
waver in his pious resolution.

He called to mind how he had opposed his own  
sister's marriage,

To another princely pagan from the northern  
kingdom,

but such was the piety of this virtuous wife,

That by the power of her prayer, she brought her  
husband to belief in Christ.

Thou art wondrous in Thy saints, O God.

Her situation then was desperate and the  
righteous Eanswythe,

Who through the inspiration of our Lord  
conceived a plan.

Taking the prince to view the still unfinished  
building work,

She pointed out a beam upon the ground

Which was too short to fit the space for which it  
was intended.

In faith, Thou art wondrous in Thy saints, O God.

"Your attention good people", Eanswythe began,  
as she addressed the assembled crowd,

"This noble prince earnestly desires to have me,  
the handmaiden of Christ, for his companion.

He seeks me for his bride, but O what a foolish  
exchange, what hateful stupidity, what an  
unbearable loss,

If I were to exchange the things of Heaven for  
those of earth!

Yet I will marry him if, by prayer, he can make  
this beam as long as is required".

Thou art wondrous in Thy saints, O God.

Supposing that his suit was won, "Your challenge  
I accept", declared the prince,

As loudly he addressed his prayers to pagan gods  
of wood and stone with their unhearing ears.

All day petitioning each mythical deity in turn  
and yet for all the volume of his pleas,

By not so much as one small inch in length did  
the beam increase.

So he, defeated, withdrew from that unequal contest.  
Still Thou art wondrous in Thy saints, O God.

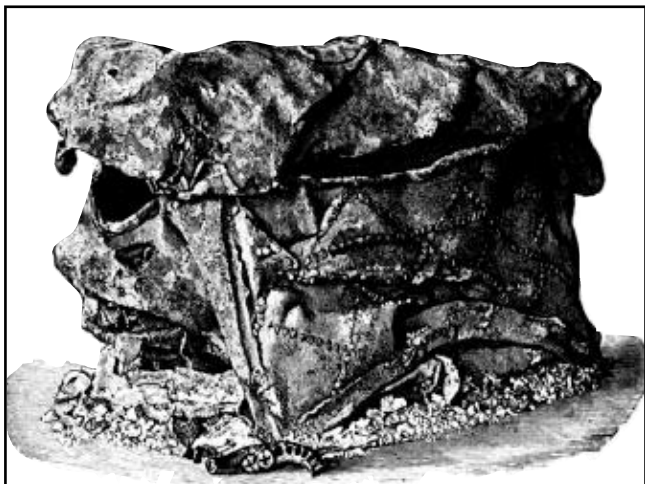
Addressing prayer to Christ our God, Saint

Eanswythe then approached the beam,

And it straightway grew in length, extending itself  
to twice the size,

To the glory of God and the wonder of all who  
witnessed this sign of heavenly blessing.

The king no longer obstructed Eanswythe in her  
desire,



*The "ages-old Saxon coffer", described in the guide book, as it appeared when discovered in June 1885. It would appear to be made of lead or pewter, with a punched, repoussé design of dots in a diagonal grid pattern, with a single, horizontal line about three inches from the top. Its design suggests a date nearer to the Reformation. What may have happened is that the relics were removed from the original Saxon reliquary, put into a contemporary box, and hastily immured before Henry VIII's commissioners arrived. The original reliquary was then primed with animal remains and left for the commissioners to find. This theory would partly account for the large number of "spurious" relics that appear in the records.*

Though he had seen that she would have sacrificed herself to please her earthly lord, if it had been the Will of God  
In truth, Thou art wondrous in Thy saints, O God.

In the seventh century's thirtieth year, according to tradition, the convent was established.  
Using for guidance the observances of the nunneries newly founded on the Continent,  
And following the disciplines of our great fathers Columban and Benedict,  
The holy women grew in stature in the Faith and in their ascetic labours,  
Establishing their house in the ecclesiastical heritage of our land.  
For Thou art wondrous in Thy saints, O God.

Numerous were the blessings bestowed by God upon the Kentish land,  
And in their gratitude, the nuns ceased not their intercession before the Throne of Grace.  
The virtue of making pilgrimages was made manifest at this time,  
And the devotion of the faithful to Peter and Paul,

the greatest of the saints,  
Is shown forth in the numerous church dedications to this Apostolic pair.  
Thou art wondrous in Thy saints, O God.

There was in those days a custom that girls should be betrothed in early teens,  
And at sixteen, Eanswythe was certainly old enough to be given in marriage,  
Though ruling a convent was a far more weighty and demanding task,  
Especially in a pioneering age, when experience and guidance were desperately scarce.  
While her desire was resolute, the saint's humility was her greatest strength.  
Thou art wondrous in Thy saints, O God.

Saint Eanswythe was not at first elected Abbess of the new foundation,  
Her youth and inexperience were subjected to the advice of those of more mature years,  
And the rigours of ascetic discipline, vigils and prayer were to be her lot,  
But Eanswythe willingly embraced it all for the love of Christ our God,  
And was, in due time, elected Abbess of the house which she had founded.  
Truly, Thou art wondrous in Thy saints, O God.



*The doorway of the shrine in the alabaster arcading in the north wall of the chancel. The reliquary, which may be glimpsed inside the brass grill, is about the size of a very large farmhouse loaf. When the shrine was opened for this photograph in September 1978 the portion of the lower jaw-bone and two molars, clearly seen in the engraving made in 1885, were not visible, although the reliquary itself was badly battered and the bottom seemed to have disintegrated, allowing small pieces of bone to spill out, as is shown in that picture (opposite).*



Of Eanswythe's rule as Abbess, Saxon Chroniclers tell us much,  
 With motherly solicitude she cared for all committed to her charge.  
 Water was in short supply in their clifftop monastic home,  
 And had to be carried by the weary nuns.  
 Thus by her prayers, the saint obliged the spring to flow uphill.  
 For Thou art wondrous in Thy saints, O God.

Greatly endowed was Saint Eanswythe with almost every virtue.  
 Numerous are the stories of her wonderworking powers.  
 Once she restored sight to a woman who was sadly blind,  
 And also released a poor soul possessed and tormented by a demon.  
 Thus having served the Lord in virginal charity, Saint Eanswythe reposed at August's end.  
 Truly Thou art wondrous in Thy saints, O God.

Over the centuries, multitudes of pilgrims have made their way to Eanswythe's shrine,

Her intercessions were sought by all estates of men.  
 Even in periods of upheaval and destructive change, the shrine inspired the pure in heart,  
 So that in the Reformation's darkest hour, the saint worked her greatest miracle of all,  
 By guiding the devoted servants who concealed her sacred bones from the hands of impious and wicked men.

For Thou art wondrous in Thy saints, O God.

Dust gathered on Saint Eanswythe's relics for three centuries and a half.

Yet her memory lingered on, deep in the consciousness of a faithful few,  
 Forming thereby, a fine thread of continuity throughout the generations,  
 Preserving for us the prayerful heritage of our nation.

Thus honouring the holy virgin Eanswythe, our hymn is this refrain,

Thou art wondrous in Thy saints, O God.

*Andrew Bond*

## The Decline of England 16. EDWARD IV (I)<sup>1</sup>

by Eadmund

**E**DWARD had been named after (St) Edward the Confessor who, as we have already discussed in this series of articles, did not really have any correspondence with the real King Eadweard III. However the character of the new king was completely very different from both the pious fool that the church now portrayed and the man who had really existed, although perhaps any resemblance was closer to the second than the first.

He was actually returning from Crusade when his father died, and although his expedition made no dramatic improvement in the fortunes of the Latin east, the tales of his deeds were already turning into legends. It was claimed that his wife, Eleanor of Castile, had sucked the venom from his wounds when a Muslim assassin had stabbed him with a poisoned dagger, while other versions ascribed his salvation to one of his bodyguard, or to a magic stone given by the Master of the Temple. It was hardly surprising that such a larger-than-life figure should be accepted unquestioningly as England's king. He had established his reputation

as a brave and ruthlessly competent leader in 1265, when he escaped from imprisonment at Hereford by pretending to test a number of horses and then making off on the swiftest, and subsequently defeated Simon de Montfort. This had convinced the barons that he was a man to be feared and respected.

England's mediaeval kings relied for their income on the profits of their own royal estates, combined with the profits of royal lordship, justice and the law courts – in a good year worth considerably more. This was just about sufficient to pay for the needs of the royal court and household and the machinery of government: the sheriffs and justices who in turn reaped rich profits from their offices. For anything more ambitious, like a campaign beyond the frontiers of the realm or even warfare against the Welsh or the Scots, subsidies were required. In latter years the barons, themselves well supplied by the labour of the English peasants, had become sluggish and unprepared to meet the costs of the King's military ambitions. Henry III had had no subsidies after the 1230s, and

his administration had lurched from one financial crisis to another, with never enough funds to pay for its schemes

### The Tax on Wool

Edward's scheme was to impose a tax on England's wool exports – the principal overseas trade and the source for many centuries of England's wealth. The tax would be paid by the merchants responsible for exporting wool, but they in turn would recoup their losses by reducing the prices that they paid to wool-growers and increasing prices that they charged to wool buyers overseas. These new customs duties amounted to about £10,000 a year. In return the King commissioned a county-by-county survey of his resources and abuses of royal authority, known as the 'Hundred Rolls' enquiry, instituted almost from the moment that the King returned to England in 1274. In its way as ambitious as the Domesday survey of the 1080s, it set the pattern for two subsequent investigations – an inquest known as 'Kirby's Quest' headed by John de Kirby in the 1280s, and a wholesale impeachment of royal justices and investigation of their crimes that followed on the King's return from Gascony in 1289. By these the King demonstrated his willingness to sacrifice his own ministers in order to both buy public support and advertise his credentials as a virtuous prince. This virtue was chiefly broadcast via Parliament, which was summoned on a near annual basis as a forum for the display of royal authority. Parliament both granted subsidy (the first one, negotiated in 1275, yielded upwards of £80,000, more than enough to pay the King's outstanding debts) and heard petitions from the King's subjects, acting as a safety valve to the grievances of those previously denied access to the King's grace.

From 1275 to 1290 Edward's administration enacted an impressive array of legislation, directly modelled or simply copied from the reformist legislation on the 1250s and 60s, intended to clarify relations between lords and tenants, prevent the wholesale alienation of property to the Church, ensure that lords were not deprived of the services that land had formerly rendered and to regulate such processes as the pursuit of debt and the indictment of crime. In 1290 this public advertisement of the King as lawmaker and father of his people was crowned by the expulsion of the Jewish community from England. Already bled dry after decades of punitive royal taxation, the Jews were used as a sacrificial victim to broadcast a

carefully controlled image of the King as a virtuous Christian prince. They were shipped over to France, not officially to return to England until the time of Oliver Cromwell, their houses and property supplying a timely pool of patronage. Edward was, in effect, employing the persecution of an unpopular minority as a means to curry favour with a grateful majority.

### Edward's Persecution of the Welsh

So much for the public image: we now turn to the less salubrious aspects of Edward's character, which have been touched on in the previous paragraph. Edward was a great persecutor of minorities. In the 1050s Harold Godwinsson's punitive expedition had sorted out the Welsh problem. Since the Conquest, however, the Welsh had come to see themselves as legitimate freedom fighters and the Norman Kings, preoccupied with foreign entanglements and a turbulent baronage at home, had lacked the means to do anything about them. Like the irrepressible guerrilla fighters of recent times: the Vietnamese or the Afghans: the Welsh had been making cross-border raids and then, when threatened with the shock and awe of an English expeditionary force, merely retreated to the hills, avoided pitched battle, and emerged once more when the danger had passed. The princes of Gwynedd – Llewellyn ap Iorweth († 1240) and his grandson, Llywelyn ap Gruffydd († 1282) ruling from the enclave of Garth Celyn overlooking the Menai straights between Bangor and Conway, had obtained recognition of their special status and become entitled to the homage of the other Welsh princes and a degree of legal autonomy from England and its kings.

In 1277 Edward, with an English army of more than 15,000, advanced from Chester along the North Welsh coast. Ships transported further troops to Anglesey to harvest the grain and hence deprive Llywelyn ap Gruffydd of the means with which to wage further war. The outcome was a negotiated settlement by which Llewelyn abandoned the gains that he had made in the 1260s and was forced to promise a huge war indemnity, which suggests a booming Welsh economy. The following year Edward presided over the re-burial of two bodies generally believed to be those of King Arthur and his wife Guinevere, to demonstrate to the Welsh that Arthur, whom their bards depicted as waiting to rise again as the champion of an independent Wales, was in fact finally dead and buried.

In 1282, Llewelyn's disgruntled younger brother, Dafydd, believing himself to have been insufficiently rewarded for his part in Edward's success of 1277, broke with the English and on Palm Sunday attacked Hawarden Castle in Flintshire. Once again a combined land and sea operation including levies from Edward's dominions in Gascony and the construction of a great pontoon bridge between Anglesey and the mainland forced the Welsh into surrender. Llywelyn was lured into an ambush at Irfon Bridge and killed. Dafydd's resistance continued for a further six months, until he too was betrayed, handed over to the English, and in 1283 at Shrewsbury was hanged, disembowelled for breaching the Sabbath at Hawarden, and his body was then quartered to mark his treason. The heads of both Llywelyn and Dafydd were exhibited on spikes outside the Tower of London; their children were imprisoned or, in the case of their daughters, forcibly joined to English nunneries, where the last of them died half a century later. Only fifteen years previously Wales had been recognized as an independent principality. Now, in less than a year, it had been brutally suppressed. In April 1284 Edward's queen, Eleanor of Castile, gave birth to a son (Edward V [II]) in Caernarfon Castle, who was immediately invested as 'Prince of Wales'.

The Welsh were not quite finished yet, however. In scornful repudiation of the chain of castles stretching from Harlech to Conway and from Caernarfon to Beaumaris in Anglesey; the wholesale importation of English settlers to new towns at Flint, Rhuddlan and elsewhere; the division of Wales itself into a series of administrative units modelled on the English shires, where major felonies were now to be tried according to English rather than native Welsh law; they rose in rebellion in 1287 and even more seriously in 1294. Ironically, in 1294 the rebels captured the unfinished fortress at Caernarfon, its walls banded in conscious imitation of the walls of Constantinople. This second uprising required the efforts of nearly 30,000 men and subsidies of more than £50,000 to suppress. Nevertheless, by 1295, Wales was effectively conquered and its past history expunged from the memory. The Welsh princely regalia were beaten into plate from which the English king might dine, and by the 1890s, when it was proposed to raise a monument to Llewelyn at Irfon Bridge, so little money was subscribed in Wales that a neighbouring English squire was obliged to step in to supply the funds.

### Edward's dealings with the Scots

Scotland had fallen after the Norman Conquest of England in a slightly more peaceful way. The bloodlines of the lairds and of the royal family had been mingled over the years with those of the Norman 'aristocracy' of England. The last of the Scot's royal line, King Alexander III, died after a fall from his horse in March 1286 while attempting a late-night crossing of the Firth of Forth to visit his young, new queen: his son, born to a first marriage to a daughter of King Henry III of England, having died only two years before in his early twenties. The only surviving heir was a granddaughter, Margaret, known as the 'Maid of Norway', who was born in 1283 to a marriage between Alexander's daughter and King Eric II of Norway. A committee of guardians was chosen by the Scots, who eventually, after negotiations between Scots, English and Norwegian ambassadors, agreed that Margaret should be sent from Norway to Scotland, leaving open the possibility that she might in due course marry Edward, the eldest son of Edward IV (I) of England, whereby Edward V (II) would become the *de facto* ruler of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales. In the event, however, Margaret died in October 1290 in the Orkney Islands (still a possession of Norway) without ever having set foot on the Scottish mainland.

The King's sour temper was probably not improved by losing his wife, Eleanor of Castile, who was not very popular being a foreigner, but with whom Edward had a particularly close and loving relationship. She was a cultured and kindly woman, and died shortly after Margaret in 1290, whilst Edward was in Nottinghamshire having just held a Parliament there. He was probably waiting for further news from Scotland. Eleanor, already ill, travelled to meet the King there, and he was at her deathbed. She merited a string of crosses, erected wherever her body rested on its journey to London.

Edward IV (I) now claimed to act as arbiter in the 'Great Cause' to nominate a successor to the Scots crown. Two families emerged, both Norman-Scots with landed interests in both countries: the Bruces and the Balliols. The Bruces were of Norman descent, from Brix near Cherbourg. Robert de Bruce had fought in Edward's army during the English conquest of Wales. John de Balliol ultimately hailed from Picardy, from Bailleul, near Abbeville. One of his ancestors had been captured alongside King Stephen at the battle of Lincoln in 1141, while another had fought for

Henry II, playing a leading role in the campaign that culminated in the capture of the Scots King, William I, near Alnwick. Edward eventually chose John de Balliol, primarily because of his pliancy and the fact that he had named his eldest son Edward, giving a rather unsubtle clue as to his loyalties. John, however, was not able to bring his brother barons to order. Robert Bruce, the son of Robert de Bruce, rebelled, almost certainly with his father's sanction, and he and a council of a dozen Normanno-Scottish barons claimed to have wrested authority from John de Balliol, and on that basis negotiated a treaty with the King of France (the origins of the 'Auld Alliance' by which the Scots and the French sought mutual support against their common enemy the King of England).

Philip IV of France had meanwhile been subverting Edward's authority in Gascony, by encouraging his subjects there to submit their cases for arbitration by his Parlement in Paris rather than by Parliament in Westminster. Edward's response was rapid and overwhelming. In a campaign lasting barely twenty-one weeks, he invaded Scotland, seizing the border fortress of Berwick and defeating their army at Dunbar. He also negotiated a series of alliances in Germany and the Low Countries to launch a two-pronged attack on the French, timed for 1297.

The costs of a war in Scotland and France, coming on top of quelling the recent Welsh rebellion were enormous, and were too high for the royal finances to bear. Additional charges of 40 shillings on each sack of wool exported from England brought outcry and resistance. Edward's allies in the Rhineland demanded extortionate subsidies, in excess of £250,000. Meanwhile the clergy of England, spurred on by the Archbishop of Canterbury and backed by Papal letters intended to starve both the English and the French war machines of finance, resisted attempts to impose subsidies on the Church. The Riccardi bankers, upon whom Edward relied for credits, collapsed, already overstretched by the costs of the Welsh campaign. In theory their debts were repayable from future proceeds of customs, but in practice these promises were just as useless a security as present-day junk bonds from Wall Street. Finally the two earls of Gloucester and Hereford, resentful of the King's extension of his authority over the Welsh Marches, refused to serve in France unless with the King in person. That meant that they would come with the King to Flanders, but would not take up independent command of his armies in

Gascony. By the time this crisis was resolved and Edward was ready to sail for Flanders, the French had already defeated his allies!

In May 1297, the King being otherwise occupied in Flanders, a freeholder from Ayrshire called William Wallace, who was already outlawed as a robber and a brigand, murdered the newly imposed English sheriff of Lanark. Either with the tacit approval of the bishop of Glasgow, or maybe as an independent agent claiming to act on behalf of King John de Balliol, Wallace now embarked on a campaign of terror. He attempted the assassination of William Ormsby, the English chief political and judicial officer, and then at Stirling Bridge, in September 1297, he lured an incompetently led<sup>2</sup> English cavalry into slaughter by his own spearmen. In the ensuing bloodbath Edward's treasurer of Scotland, Hugh of Cressingham, was killed and his skin allegedly used to make Wallace a sword belt. Little is actually known of William Wallace: he may have been a freedom fighter, but more likely was a common brigand taking the chance of causing mayhem. Whatever he was, his rebellion could not have come at a worse time. Edward, back from his ineffectual trip to Flanders, made a wholesale invasion of Scotland with a large number of Welsh archers and infantry as a major contingent of his army. Wallace's spearmen were soundly defeated at Falkirk in July 1298, and Wallace himself melted away in the confusion. He was not captured for a further seven years, when he was tried in Westminster Hall, hung, disembowelled and quartered, like Dafydd of Wales. His head was displayed on London Bridge.

The Scots, emboldened by Wallace's victory at Stirling and not subsequently cowed by successive expeditions that Edward launched against them in 1300, 1301 and 1303, found a leader in the younger Robert Bruce. He had attempted rebellion twice before, but on each occasion he had made his peace with King Edward, but in February 1306, during a meeting with John Comyn at the church of Greyfriars in Dumfries, Bruce murdered Comyn before the high altar, and a month later, on the Feast of the Annunciation (25 March) at Scone near Perth, he was crowned as King Robert I of Scotland by the patriotic bishop Robert Wishart of Glasgow. He was the first King of Scotland not to be crowned on the Stone of Scone, which Edward had removed to Westminster Abbey in 1296, but his coronation ensured a renewal of Scots independence and a further three hundred years of Scottish kingship.

Where the Welsh princes had fallen before the might of Edward's armies, fading into an impotent nostalgia for the glories of a vanished Welsh past, Scotland recovered both its independence and its own line of kings. William the Bastard, having almost lost the prize of the English throne by not realizing the overwhelming superiority of infantrymen ensconced in a secure place with spears and barricades over lightly armed although mobile cavalrymen, abandoned reliance on cavalry after that, and reverted to the English tactics of riding to battle, but dismounting and fighting on foot once arrived at the place of slaughter. This principle was amply demonstrated again and again in other places than at Stirling Bridge. At Courtrai in 1302, Flemish town militias of Bruges, Ghent and Ypres inflicted a crushing defeat upon a mounted French army, and at Montgarden in 1315 a small army of Swiss infantry inflicted total defeat upon the cavalry of Duke Leopold of Austria. The essential futility and impotence of much that passed for chivalric valour when pitted against small but determined forces faced with what in theory should have been far more sophisticated opponents began to seep through, and Edward adopted the less glamorous but more effective tactics of opposing such forces with spearmen and archers. It was this tactic that was to win battles in the future. But the encircling of Wales with a line of stone castles, thus cutting the surrounded population off from sources of outside succour, and effectively besieging them into submission, could not work in Scotland. Even though in 1296 he had pursued his enemies as far north as Aberdeen, and in 1303 his troops had garrisoned Inverness, there were always points further north and west to which the Scots could retire and sally forth as soon as the immediate danger had passed.

The essential bitterness and cold hatred in Edward was manifested in 1306, in response to Robert Bruce's final defection. Hitherto traitorous nobility had been allowed to plead for forgiveness or submit to imprisonment, but now the execution of Dafydd and William Wallace signalled a new brutality in the King's dealings with rebels. The King's anger was turned not only against noble prisoners, such as John, Earl of Atholl, the first earl to have been executed rather than killed in battle since earl Waltheof in 1076; but also against women. Isobel, Countess of Buchan and Mary, Robert Bruce's sister, were imprisoned and deliberately displayed in cages of wood and iron in the castles of Berwick and Roxburgh. Edward was a harsh man and his anger is said, as late as 1304, to

have killed the Archbishop of York stone dead. The mood at court can be sensed from an account book of 1297, recording the cost of repairing a coronet belonging to the King's daughter Elizabeth, hurled by Edward into the fire.

Edward lived to the age of 68, longer than any other king in the 250 years since the Norman Conquest (Henry I had reached only 67 and Henry III, despite the great length of his reign, died at 65), and so he was condemned to witness the failures and setbacks of his earthly ambitions. On 18 May 1291 the great seaport of Acre, last bastion of the crusader states, fell to the siege of an Egyptian army. Less than a year after the fall of Acre, in April 1292, the death of Pope Nicholas IV ushered in a crisis for the western church, from which emerged an Italian pope, Boniface VIII, so at odds with the kings of the west that in 1303 a French army surprised him at Anagni, just south of Rome, and beat him so badly that within a month he was dead of injury and shame. The outcome was the election of a French pope, Clement V, and the removal of the papacy from Rome to Avignon in southern France. For over seventy years the Avignon popes were to be more concerned with taxation and meeting the costs of their own bureaucracy than ever they were with the ordering of Christendom.

Nature also seemed to be rebelling. The yield of cereal crops such as wheat or barley was pathetically low. On prime agricultural land in years of relative abundance no more than ten times the weight of seed corn was harvested, and in years of famine there was less than a doubling of the seed<sup>3</sup>. The clearance and cultivation of new acreage, although conducted on a massive scale throughout the thirteenth century, raising the amount of arable land to about ten million acres, a figure not achieved again before the early nineteenth century, only added lands that were at best marginal, such as the Cotswold uplands, or the Norfolk Breckland. Cattle murrain and sheep disease, which accompanied the poor harvests after 1290, reduced the value of this land yet further. The expanding human population was vulnerable even to brief periods of dearth. Add to this the ravaging of much of the north of England and lowland Scotland as a result of the Anglo-Scottish war after the 1290s, and we see rural England, (neglected by the Norman aristocracy, who had used it simply as a self-renewing supply of money), poised on the brink of disaster.



Edward IV (I) Passed away in 1307, wracked with dysentery, on his way to what was already proving to be yet another doomed attempt to impose his authority on the Scots. Although frequently praised as a great and good king by modern historians, who overlook his persecution of the Welsh and Scots in acclamation of his 'achievement' of preparing the ground for an eventual 'United Kingdom', Edward was not an attractive character, nor an essentially good person. After the death of his wife any moderating influence that she had brought to bear was lost, and he died a cold, bitter, wrathful man, forced to witness the eventual failure of many of his plans.

This is the last edition of *Orthodox England*; but this Orthodox history of England will continue on the website of *The Guild of St Eadmund* to be found at <https://sites.google.com/site/guildofsteadmund/> Please go there to continue reading.

1. It all began with Edward I in 1272, who should really have been Edward IV. Most chroniclers could recall the deeds of Eadweard 'the Confessor' (1042-66) and Eadweard 'The Elder' (899-924) but overlooked the short

reign of the boy King Eadweard 'The Martyr' (975-78), so there are instances of Edward I being wrongly called Edward III during his reign. Later those practices fell out of use and Edward became known in later times as 'King Edward, son of King Henry'. However with three Kings named Edward in succession it became necessary to differentiate between them, so they were numbered Edward I, II and III by the middle of the 14th century with 'since the Conquest' added to show the fact that there were others in the dim and distant past. This is how the Norman Conquest of 1066 became the official starting point for Regnal numbers of English Monarchs; but with our superior historical knowledge I think we may revert to a more factual numeration, with a bracketed acknowledgement to Mediaeval error.

2. The army's commander was so determined to observe the chivalric conventions that he effectively required the battle to be started twice, recalling more than 5,000 troops who had already crossed over to the Scottish side of the bridge, in order that he might publicly confer knighthood on various of those about to fight.
3. To give a modern comparison: in the nineteenth century, even before the introduction of techniques of seed selection, farmers expected a yield nearer to thirty times the quantity of seed sown.



# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



Why do Orthodox object to astrology?

*I. V., Kettering*

We do not obey the Creation: we obey the Creator. Our destiny, that is, God's will for us, is higher than the stars.



Why is there an Anglican fascination with sobornost?

*J. A., San Francisco*

Sobornost is simply the Slavonic word for catholicity. Of course, in a foreign language it sounds much more exotic – which Anglicans love! They love this because, as Protestants and outside

the Church, they do not understand, just as Roman Catholics do not understand, real catholicity.



Why do Roman Catholics and Orthodox wear a cross around their necks?

*R. F., Colchester*

All Orthodox wear one because we believe in the Resurrection. For Catholics there is a very strong belief in the Crucifixion.



Is the Russian form of the cross Biblical and why do you see it on cupolas with a half-moon underneath it?

*T. D., Colchester*

The so-called Russian cross, sometimes called in Western sources the Byzantine cross, and also called the eight-pointed cross, the three-bar cross or the Orthodox cross, is in reality simply the Christian cross, the representation of the cross on which Christ was crucified.

In the second century both St Irenaeus of Lyon and St Justin the philosopher explain that only when Christ was put up on the cross did the soldiers add the bottom bar, because before that they did not know where his feet would reach to. If you read the Gospels, you will see that then Pilate added the top bar with the trilingual inscription (Jn. 19, 18-19 and 25 and Matt. 27. 37). Only when Christ turned to speak to the thief on the right-hand side did his left foot put pressure on the bottom bar and turn it up towards the right. The

half-moon beneath the cross is also Biblical and is taken directly from Rev 12, 1. It is found at least as early as 1461.



What should we do about the anti-Semitic Slavonic word 'zhid' found in the texts of the services in Passion Week? Surely it should be changed.

*M. E., Paris*

The word 'zhid' is only 'anti-Semitic in Russian'. It is the perfectly normal word for 'Jew' in Slavonic. In English it is translated as 'the Hebrews', just as in French 'les hebreux'. In this way it cannot be used in an anti-Jewish way.

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