

The Cult of St Edmund, King and Martyr, and the Medieval Kings of England

PAUL WEBSTER

Cardiff University

Abstract

Two notable late-medieval images depicting St Edmund King and Martyr, or his shrine, associate his cult with prayers and intercession for the king. In Lydgate's illustrated verse life of the saint, Henry VI is shown kneeling before the shrine, while on the Wilton Diptych, Edmund is one of three saints presenting Richard II to the Virgin Mary. This article explores royal devotion to Edmund, examining efforts of kings to sustain a religious aura linked to saintly predecessors. The article considers evidence for royal visits to Bury St Edmunds abbey and gift-giving in honour of the saint. Rulers from the eleventh century onwards venerated Edmund, including Edward the Confessor (himself later canonised). Twelfth- and thirteenth-century royal pilgrimages combined visits to shrines at Westminster, Canterbury, Bury and East Anglian holy sites. Henry III named his second son in honour of the saint. Meanwhile, Edmund's banner was carried, and gifts made in intercession or thanks, for success in battle. Despite emerging interest in the martial cult of St George, kingly giving in honour of Edmund continued in the fourteenth century, with the saint honoured alongside others, notably the Confessor and Becket. This combined devotion, it is argued, was the predominant way in which kings of England invoked the saints. St Edmund's importance in kingly religious activity linked sanctified kingship with appeals to the attributes of a range of saints.

Murdered by the Danes in 869 and swiftly accorded popular veneration as a saint, Edmund, king of East Anglia from 855 to 869, became the focus of a cult to which devotion was established in the tenth and eleventh centuries, and then sustained across the Middle Ages.¹ In particular, the martyred saint attracted the attention of successive generations of the rulers of England. The enduring nature of this veneration by English royalty is shown in two later medieval visual sources, both depicting St Edmund King and Martyr, or his shrine, and associating his cult with prayers and intercession for the king. In Lydgate's

This article is dedicated in memory of Antonia Gransden, to whom all historians of the medieval abbey of Bury St Edmunds and its sources are indebted.

¹ For an overview: David H. Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, 4th edn (Oxford, 1997), pp. 151–20. See also Antonia Gransden, 'Edmund [St Edmund] (d. 869)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) <<https://doi-org.abc.cardiff.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/8500>> [accessed 23 Aug. 2019]; Francis Young, *Edmund: In Search of England's Lost King* (London and New York, 2018), pp. 41–3.

illustrated verse life of the saint, created for presentation to the king in 1439, the young Henry VI, wearing his crown and a gold robe decorated in red, is shown kneeling in prayer before the golden shrine, with two monks and four members of the royal court in attendance.² A generation earlier, the Wilton Diptych, created in the late 1390s for King Richard II, showed Edmund as one of three saints (the others being Edward the Confessor and John the Baptist) presenting the ruler to the Virgin Mary.³

This article explores royal devotion to Edmund, examining efforts of kings to sustain a religious aura linked to saintly predecessors. Evidence for royal visits to Bury St Edmunds abbey and gift-giving in honour of the saint will be considered. Rulers from the eleventh century onwards venerated Edmund, including Cnut, Edward the Confessor and William the Conqueror. Twelfth- and thirteenth-century royal pilgrimages combined visits to shrines at Westminster, Canterbury, Bury and East Anglian holy sites. Henry III named his second son in honour of the saint. Meanwhile, Edmund's banner was carried, and gifts made in intercession or thanks for success in battle. Despite emerging interest in the martial cult of St George, kingly giving in honour of Edmund continued in the later Middle Ages, with the saint honoured alongside others, notably the Confessor and Becket. Such combined devotion was the predominant way in which kings of England invoked the saints. St Edmund's importance in kingly religious activity linked sanctified kingship with appeals to the attributes of a range of saints.

On the one hand, royal association with St Edmund and his cult could involve provision for the buildings and fabric of the church erected in his honour at Bury St Edmunds, and of legal rights and privileges that could be used for the benefit of the religious community that developed and grew there. Examples of gift-giving to Bury for building works can be found from the early stages of devotion to Edmund, where royalty were instrumental in providing and supporting elements crucial to a flourishing cult. King Æthelstan established a religious house in 925 to take care of the saint's bodily remains.⁴ In the first half of the eleventh century, the cult found favour with King Cnut, whose Danish origins suggest an involvement motivated by reconciliation of Anglo-Saxon and Danish interests, and perhaps an expiatory gesture, in the light of the belief that Cnut's father, Swein Forkbeard (d. 1014), had died following a vision of the saint brandishing a spear. In 1020, Cnut provided for the construction of the first stone church at Bury, which in time would develop into one of the largest Benedictine monasteries in England. This grant was backed

² London, British Library, Ms. Harley 2278; *The Life of St Edmund King and Martyr: John Lydgate's Illustrated Verse Life Presented to Henry VI. A Facsimile of British Library MS Harley 2278*, with an introduction by A. S. G. Edwards (London, 2004), fo. 4v.

³ London, The National Gallery, NG4451 <<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/english-or-french-the-wilton-diptych>> [accessed 29 Aug. 2019]. For an example of the rich historiography of this artefact, see Dillian Gordon, Lisa Monnas and Caroline Elam (eds), *The Regal Image of Richard II and the Wilton Diptych* (London, 1997).

⁴ Farmer, *Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, p. 151.

up with grants of rights enshrined by charter, including the jurisdiction over the developing town at Bury. The abbey's rights were extended widely into Suffolk by Cnut's successor, King Edward the Confessor, himself later canonised and widely revered as a saintly ruler.⁵ The church built in Cnut's reign was consecrated on 18 October 1032, the anniversary of the battle of Assandun (1016), where Cnut had defeated the Anglo-Saxon ruler, Edmund Ironside.⁶

Further evidence of royal respect for the abbey is shown by King John's decision to return the community's possessions at the time of his general seizure of church property in 1208, at the start of an interdict that lasted until 1214. The abbey's chronicler stated that the king did so out of reverence for the saint.⁷ That the abbey respected the idea that the king had a vested interest in its saint is suggested by the way in which Baldwin (abbot 1065–97) obtained permission from King William II (William Rufus) before proceeding with the translation of Edmund's relics in 1095.⁸ The enduring nature of the relationship, and the importance kings attached to granting privileges in honour of their favoured saints, is shown in Richard II's reign, when the king gave the prior and convent at Bury the right to hold custody of the abbey's temporalities during abbatial vacancies, doing so 'out of devotion to St Edmund'.⁹

One straightforward way of creating an association between monarchy and the cult of a saint was for the king to visit that saint's burial church. For a number of kings, there is evidence of such pilgrimage to Bury St Edmunds, or at least of royal visits, raising the possibility that prayers were performed and offerings made at the shrine. Both Edward the Confessor and William the Conqueror granted or confirmed lands and rights to the abbey and the abbot, Baldwin, may have been present at the Confessor's deathbed. He later became the Conqueror's physician and perhaps had performed the same role for the Confessor.¹⁰ When William came to Bury, it was noted that he approached St Edmund's shrine with head bowed.¹¹ Matilda of Flanders joined her husband, William, more than once in visiting Bury St Edmunds, making gifts to the community.

⁵ *Ibid.*; Young, *Edmund*, pp. 16, 69, 89, 91; Emma Cownie, *Religious Patronage in Anglo-Norman England, 1066–1135* (London and Woodbridge, 1998), p. 67.

⁶ Young, *Edmund*, p. 90; M. K. Lawson, 'Cnut [Canute] (d. 1035)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) <<https://doi-org.abc.cardiff.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/4579>> [accessed 19 Dec. 2019].

⁷ 'Annales S. Edmundi a. 1–1212', in *Ungedruckte Anglo-Normannische Geschichtsquellen*, ed. F. Liebermann (Strasbourg, 1879), pp. 97–155, at pp. 146–7.

⁸ Robert Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things? Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford, 2013), p. 285.

⁹ *Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office, Richard II, 1396–1399* (London, 1927), p. 21.

¹⁰ David Bates (ed.), *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum: The Acta of William I (1066–1087)* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 196–7 (nos 35–6), 199–209 (nos 38–9), 213–14 (nos 43–4); Frank Barlow, *Edward the Confessor*, new edn (New Haven, CT and London, 1997), p. 77; Cownie, *Religious Patronage*, pp. 67–71.

¹¹ David Bates, 'The abbey and the Norman Conquest: an unusual case?', in Tom Licence (ed.), *Bury St Edmunds and the Norman Conquest* (Woodbridge, 2014), pp. 5–21, at p. 12.

Following her death in 1083, the Conqueror made a gift to the abbey for the benefit of her soul.¹² In 1188, Henry II came to Bury within a month of taking his (ultimately unfulfilled) vow to go on crusade.¹³ Following his coronation in 1189, Richard I ‘piously sought after St Edmund for the purpose of prayer’. He was probably present at Bury on the saint’s feast day (20 November).¹⁴ Henry III is known to have visited Bury on at least fifteen occasions during his reign, and he often sought to do so on the November feast day.¹⁵ The king was staying at the abbey when struck by what proved to be his final illness in September 1272. He died at Westminster and was buried at the abbey there on St Edmund’s feast day (20 November).¹⁶ On several instances during his reign, he also sought to honour Edmund’s feasts when he was not present at the abbey, for instance in 1236, when payment was made for an offering on behalf of the king and queen, and in 1248, when a gift to the shrine was made ‘because the king was not there this year’.¹⁷ In 1253, offerings were made at Bury on behalf of both Henry and his son Edmund when they fell ill, while in 1257, gifts were made on Henry’s behalf by the queen, Eleanor of Provence, and their children.¹⁸

Offerings could be made in combination with intercessory activity associated with other cults, as can be seen for a number of rulers. In 1177, before Easter, Henry II went to Becket’s shrine at Canterbury, accompanying Count Philip I of Flanders. After Easter, Henry in turn went to Bury St Edmunds and then on to Ely, the site of the shrine of St Æthelthryth (or Etheldreda, d. 679), queen of Northumbria and daughter of King Anna of the East Angles.¹⁹ On his return from crusade and captivity in 1194, Richard I was swift to visit both Canterbury and Bury

¹² David Bates, *William the Conqueror* (New Haven CT and London, 2016), pp. 449, 501. See also Antonia Gransden, *A History of the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds 1182–1256: Samson of Tottington to Edmund of Walpole* (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 282 and n. 184, 295; Bates, ‘The abbey and the Norman Conquest’, p. 12; Cownie, *Religious Patronage*, p. 71.

¹³ Diana Greenway and Jane Sayers (trans.), *Jocelin of Brakelond: Chronicle of the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds* (Oxford and New York, 1989), p. 48.

¹⁴ Joseph Stevenson (ed.), *Radulphi de Coggeshall Chronicon Anglicanum*, Rolls Series (London, 1875), p. 97; Gransden, *A History of the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds 1182–1256*, p. 63; Lionel Landon, *The Itinerary of Richard I with Studies on Certain Matters of Interest Connected with his Reign*, Pipe Roll Society new series 13 (London, 1955), p. 16.

¹⁵ Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c.550–c.1307* (Ithaca, NY, 1974), p. 395. Henry III’s giving to Bury St Edmunds is discussed in detail in Gransden, *A History of the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds 1182–1256*, pp. 245–8.

¹⁶ Antonia Gransden, ‘The abbey of Bury St Edmunds and national politics in the reigns of King John and Henry III’, in J. Loades (ed.), *Monastic Studies*, II (Bangor, 1992), pp. 67–86, at p. 83; Antonia Gransden (ed. and trans.), *The Chronicle of Bury St Edmunds 1212–1301*, Nelson’s Medieval Texts (London, 1964), p. 53.

¹⁷ *Calendar of the Liberate Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office 1226–1240* (London, 1916), p. 246; *Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III Preserved in the Public Record Office 1247–1251* (London, 1922), p. 12.

¹⁸ *Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III Preserved in the Public Record Office 1251–1253* (London, 1922), p. 465; *Calendar of the Liberate Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office 1251–1260* (London, 1959), p. 428.

¹⁹ Diana Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England* (London and New York, 2000), p. 115.

St Edmunds.²⁰ Following his coronation in 1199, King John embarked on a combined pilgrimage that took him from the coronation church at Westminster, to Bury St Edmunds and then on to Canterbury. He may also have taken in St Albans (burial site of the first English martyr) during this period. His visit to Bury was said to have been ‘impelled by a vow and out of devotion’ and was accompanied by a confirmation of the gifts of numerous of his predecessors.²¹

Similarly, an association between ruler and cult could be created by the staging of major events of national and (or) dynastic significance on the saint’s feast day, or by using items associated with the saint on such occasions. When Richard, earl of Cornwall, second son of King John and younger brother of King Henry III, was elected King of the Romans in 1257, he set out to claim this title on the feast of the translation of St Edmund (29 April), having first travelled to Bury St Edmunds. In its account of the events of 1292, the Bury chronicle claimed that Edward I installed John Balliol as king of Scots on the feast of St Edmund (20 November).²² This feast was the day chosen in 1376 for the inauguration of the future Richard II as prince of Wales, duke of Cornwall and earl of Chester, in succession to his father, Edward the Black Prince.²³ Making a connection with the saints on significant dynastic occasions could backfire if something went wrong. At Richard’s coronation a year later, his regalia included footwear described as the slippers of St Edmund. These were lost in the confusion caused after the ten-year-old king fell asleep during the ceremony, as a result of which he was carried back to Westminster Palace by Sir Simon Burley.²⁴ One chronicler, Adam Usk, although he did not mention Edmund specifically, interpreted the loss of one of the coronation shoes as foretelling the Peasants’ Revolt.²⁵

Extensive evidence of devotion to the saints in combination can be found in the reign of Henry III, who made pilgrimage tours of shrine sites in East Anglia, including some or all of the holy sites at Bury St Edmunds, St Albans, Ely, Bromholm, site of a relic of the True Cross that formed part of the rood screen, and Walsingham, a centre of the cult

²⁰ Landon, *Itinerary of Richard I*, p. 85.

²¹ William Stubbs (ed.), *The Historical Works of Gervase of Canterbury*, Rolls Series, 2 vols (London, 1879–80), II, p. 92; William Stubbs (ed.), *Radulfi de Diceto Decani Landoniensi Opera Historica*, Rolls Series, 2 vols (London, 1876), II, p. 166; Greenway and Sayers (trans.), *Jocelin of Brakelond*, pp. 102–3; Henry G. Hewlett (ed.), *Rogeri de Wendover liber qui dicitur Flores Historiarum ab anno domini MCLIV annoque Henrici Anglorum Regis Secundi Primo*, Rolls Series, 3 vols (London, 1886–9), I, p. 288; Thomas Duffus Hardy (ed.), *Rotuli Chartarum in Turri Londinensi asservati*, I.1: 1199–1216 (London, 1837), pp. 38a–38b.

²² Gransden (ed. and trans.), *Chronicle of Bury*, pp. 21, 115. For various key dates surrounding the accession of Balliol, see Michael Prestwich, *Edward I* (New Haven, CT and London, 1997), pp. 369–70.

²³ For the date: Nigel Saul, *Richard II* (New Haven, CT and London, 1997), p. 17.

²⁴ V. H. Galbraith (ed.), *The Anonimale Chronicle 1313–1381: From a MS Written at St Mary’s Abbey, York* (Manchester, 1927), p. 111; Saul, *Richard II*, p. 26.

²⁵ Young, *Edmund*, p. 113; C. Given-Wilson (ed. and trans.), *The Chronicle of Adam Usk 1377–1421*, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1997), pp. 90–1.

of the Virgin Mary.²⁶ Early examples of such an itinerary can be found during Henry's minority, in 1224, when, in the space of just over a week in April, he went from Bury St Edmunds to Ely, and back to St Albans, and in 1226, again in April, when an itinerary of a fortnight took him from Walsingham to Bromholm, Bury St Edmunds and Ely.²⁷ In a number of years during the period referred to as his 'Personal Rule', Henry made visits to several of these sites within a short period of time – suggesting a planned itinerary of devotional activity. This can be seen in February 1234 (Bury and Bromholm), March 1235 (Bromholm, Walsingham, Bury and Ely), March 1236 (Bury and St Albans), late May and early June 1238 (Bury, Bromholm, Walsingham and St Albans), June 1244 (St Albans, Bury and Ely), between 10 March and early April 1245 (St Albans, Bury, Walsingham for the feast of Annunciation, and Ely), March 1248 (Bury, Walsingham and Bromholm), between 13 March and early April 1251 (Bury, Bromholm, Walsingham for the feast of the Annunciation, Ely and St Albans), and in late August and early September 1252 (St Albans, Bury and Ely).²⁸ This was a trend continued by Henry's son, Edward I, for instance in 1292, when he came to Bury for the feast of St Edmund's translation (29 April), accompanied by his children, before travelling on to Walsingham and then setting off to campaign in Scotland. It can also be seen in the later fourteenth century, in 1383, when Richard II and Anne of Bohemia, accompanied by the king's uncle, John of Gaunt, visited the shrine at Bury and went on to Walsingham and to Ely.²⁹

That St Edmund was prominent among the saints to hold Henry III's attention during his itineration is suggested by his decision to name his second son Edmund, in 1245. Ahead of the birth, there is again evidence of veneration of the saints in combination. Presumably to protect the queen, Eleanor of Provence, and her baby, a relic of the pall of St Edmund of Abingdon (c.1175–1240) was brought to Westminster by two nuns, who were paid £10 for doing so.³⁰ An antiphon in honour of St Edmund of Bury was chanted while the queen was in labour, and

²⁶ For wider discussion of the piety and religious giving of King Henry III, see Sally Dixon-Smith, 'The image and reality of alms giving in the great halls of Henry III', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 152 (1999), pp. 79–96; David Carpenter, *Henry III: The Rise to Power and Personal Rule 1207–1258* (New Haven, CT and London, 2020), pp. 273–348, with the East Anglian pilgrimages discussed at pp. 317–18.

²⁷ Julie E. Kanter, 'Peripatetic and sedentary kingship: the itineraries of the thirteenth-century English kings' (PhD thesis, University of London, 2010), pp. 938, 978.

²⁸ Kanter, 'Peripatetic and sedentary kingship', pp. 244 and n. 3, 1003, 1022, 1042–3, 1082, 1157, 1174–5, 1230, 1285–6, 1307–8.

²⁹ Julie E. Crockford, 'The itinerary of Edward I of England: pleasure, piety and governance', in Alison L. Gascoigne, Leonie V. Hicks and Marianne O'Doherty (eds), *Journeying along Medieval Routes in Europe and the Middle East* (Turnhout, 2016), pp. 231–57, at p. 250; Gransden (ed. and trans.), *Chronicle of Bury*, p. 113; L. C. Hector and Barbara F. Harvey (ed. and trans.), *The Westminster Chronicle, 1381–1394*, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1982), pp. 42–3.

³⁰ *Calendar of the Liberate Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office 1240–1245* (London, 1930), p. 284; Joseph Creamer, 'St Edmund of Canterbury and Henry III in the shadow of Thomas Becket', in Janet Burton, Philip Schofield and Björn Weiler (eds), *Thirteenth Century England XIV* (Woodbridge, 2013), pp. 129–39, at pp. 129–31.

the king wrote joyfully to the abbot of Bury St Edmunds, Henry of Rushbrooke, to announce the news of the prince's birth.³¹ Here again we see evidence of St Edmund being one saint among many from whom the king sought combined intercession, in this case for a successful birth. Royal largesse linked to the safe delivery of the baby can also be found at Westminster abbey, site of the cult of Henry III's favourite among the saints, Edward the Confessor, after whom his eldest son had been named, at the shrine of St Thomas Becket at Canterbury and at St Augustine's abbey, Canterbury.³²

While caution should be exercised in assessing the commemorative nature of choice of names, Henry III was not alone in naming one of his sons Edmund.³³ If not a custom among his Anglo-Saxon predecessors, the name was at least in royal use, as seen in the choice of Edmund as name for the eldest son and the successor of Edward the Elder (king of the Anglo-Saxons, 899–924). This choice came at a time when the issuing of the St Edmund memorial coinage had demonstrated the growth of the nascent cult, one which could provide a rallying point for the Anglo-Saxon community, and an opportunity for integration for the Scandinavian invaders.³⁴ Edmund Ironside (d. 1016) also shared the saint's name, although we cannot now know whether there was a commemorative purpose.³⁵ Following the example of Henry III, other later medieval rulers – Edward I and Edward III – also bestowed the saint's name among those chosen for their sons.³⁶ In the twentieth century, a faint echo can be found in the fourth given name of the fourth son of King George V and Queen Mary of Teck. This was Prince George, duke of Kent (1902–42), christened George Edward Alexander Edmund.³⁷ The name Edmund at least remained one that could be bestowed on members of the royal family.

Royal veneration of St Edmund could also involve extensive largesse in the form of gifts of objects. The devotions of Henry III provide ample

³¹ Gransden (ed. and trans.), *Chronicle of Bury*, p. 13; Thomas Arnold (ed.), 'Cronica Buriensis 1040–1346', in Thomas Arnold (ed.), *Memorials of the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds*, Rolls Series, 3 vols (London, 1890–6), III, pp. 28–9.

³² Simon Lloyd, 'Edmund [called Edmund Crouchback], first earl of Lancaster and first earl of Leicester (1245–1296)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2008) <<https://doi-org.abc.cardiff.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/8504>> [accessed 28 Aug. 2019].

³³ On the problems and possibilities of the analysis of naming patterns, see Cecily Clark, 'English personal names ca. 650–1300: some prosopographical bearings', *Medieval Prosopography*, 8 (1987), pp. 31–60; J. C. Holt, 'What's in a name? Family nomenclature and the Norman Conquest', in J. C. Holt, *Colonial England 1066–1215* (London and Rio Grande, 1997), pp. 179–96.

³⁴ Tim Pestell, *Landscapes of Monastic Foundation: The Establishment of Religious Houses in East Anglia c.650–1200* (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 76–80.

³⁵ On Ironside: M. K. Lawson, 'Edmund II [known as Edmund Ironside] (d. 1016)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) <<https://doi-org.abc.cardiff.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/8502>> [accessed 23 Dec. 2019].

³⁶ Young, *Edmund*, p. 106.

³⁷ Philip Ziegler, 'George, Prince, first duke of Kent (1902–1942)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2011) <<https://doi-org.abc.cardiff.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/33371>> [accessed 15 Jan. 2020].

evidence. In 1236, the records of Henry III's government reveal a payment of £7 16s. paid to the sacristan of Bury St Edmunds, to provide 300 pounds of wax to make 300 candles to be placed around St Edmund's shrine on his feast day. Two years later, 500 pounds of wax was to be given to the sacristan, for 1,000 candles. These grants were recorded alongside donations in honour of other saints and cult sites. In 1238, this included Becket's shrine at Canterbury; in 1240, grants in honour of St Edmund were accompanied by giving to the church at Walsingham, an important centre of devotion to the Virgin Mary.³⁸ Henry's largesse also included a gift of two gold brooches and twelve *oboli de Musc* (Almohad dinars and double dinars), costing 114s. 8d., offered by the king at the shrine in 1242. A further forty-four marks were provided for acquiring four silver candlesticks and thirty marks for a new altar frontal in 1251, along with further sums spent on cups for holding the wine during the mass ceremony at various parish churches and hospitals under the jurisdiction of Bury St Edmunds abbey.³⁹

Royal devotional activity in honour of St Edmund did not only occur at the site of his burial and shrine at Bury St Edmunds. William the Conqueror's religious giving included patronage which contributed to an association between the English saint and the French royal patron, St Denis. The Conqueror paid for a tower at the abbey of St-Denis, which, although it collapsed during the king's lifetime, housed an altar dedicated to Edmund, likely to have contained a relic of the saint, while scenes from the saint's *vita* were depicted on stone capitals installed in the abbey's crypt.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, objects were not just commissioned for the saint's shrine at Bury, as the evidence of an inventory of the goods of Westminster abbey associated with the shrine of St Edward the Confessor, enrolled in 1267, shows. Among the items listed was an image of St Edmund with a crown, adorned with a number of precious stones and valued at £86.⁴¹ In Richard II's reign, we also find evidence of Edmund's feast day being marked at Westminster, the home of the cult of the Confessor. In 1390, the night before the feast, Richard attended Vespers and midnight Matins at the abbey. He was then present at the procession and high mass on the feast day itself. The convent received ten

³⁸ *Calendar of the Liberate Rolls 1226–1240*, pp. 356–7; *Calendar of the Liberate Rolls 1240–1245*, p. 9.

³⁹ *Calendar of the Liberate Rolls 1240–1245*, p. 113; *Calendar of the Liberate Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office 1245–1251* (London, 1937), pp. 343–4. *Oboli de Musc* were gold coins – dinars and double-dinars – minted between the mid-twelfth- and mid-thirteenth-centuries by the Almohad dynasty in Spain and North Africa: D. A. Carpenter, 'The gold treasure of Henry III', in D. A. Carpenter, *The Reign of Henry III* (London and Rio Grande, OH, 1996), pp. 107–36, at p. 109; Philip Grierson, 'Oboli de Musc', *English Historical Review*, 66 (1951), pp. 75–81.

⁴⁰ Pamela Z. Blum, 'The Saint Edmund cycle in the crypt at Saint-Denis', in Antonia Gransden (ed.), *Bury St Edmunds: Medieval Art, Architecture, Archaeology and Economy*, British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions 20 (Leeds, 1998), pp. 57–68, at p. 65; Young, *Edmund*, p. 96; Bates, 'The abbey and the Norman Conquest', p. 9.

⁴¹ *Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office, Henry III, 1266–1272* (London, 1913), pp. 135–40 (at p. 139).

marks for its trouble. Further steps were taken in 1391, when Westminster abbey received a grant to pay for the maintenance of candles before the images of St Edmund and of St Thomas Becket, on both their death-day and translation feasts.⁴² This was not just a phenomenon associated with Westminster. One of Richard II's gifts to Windsor also invoked Edmund, as his arms, three gold crowns on a blue shield, and those of St Edward were included in the commission of a pyx.⁴³

Nor did such artefacts have to be items that the king gave away, but rather they could be items he commissioned for personal use, or objects he was given. The Wilton Diptych, a portable altarpiece that potentially could have travelled with the king, provides a good example of the former. Meanwhile, among an inventory of the goods of Richard II's chapel, we find an image of St Edmund carrying four arrows and an orb, valued at £220, given by the king of France, Charles VI, perhaps a new year present in 1398. Richard had married Charles's daughter, Isabel of France, in 1396.⁴⁴ Henry IV included the saint among those depicted on his second great seal, commissioned in 1406. Here, Edmund appeared alongside St Michael, St George and St Edward the Confessor.⁴⁵ A further example is provided by the imperial crown of Henry VIII, which is thought likely to have included small figures of both St Edward the Confessor and St Edmund King and Martyr. Recorded in an inventory of 1521, this remained in use until the reign of Charles I (d. 1649).⁴⁶

We can also see that St Edmund was associated with the crown in a range of visual sources. Lydgate's life of the saint and the Wilton Diptych depiction have already been noted. In the former, in addition to the image of Henry VI praying at the shrine, an illumination is also included of the life being presented to the king, who this time wears an ermine cloak over his gold robe and again wears his crown, in a room which may well represent a chapter house with numerous monks and members of the court in attendance.⁴⁷ The manuscript also included a number of depictions of royalty, as the rulers and their consorts that formed part of the narrative of Edmund's story were seen in the eyes of a fifteenth-century illuminator, depictions that perhaps tell us much about how royalty looked at the time of composition.⁴⁸ In the Wilton

⁴² Hector and Harvey (eds and trans.), *The Westminster Chronicle*, pp. 454–5; *Calendar of the Charter Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office, V: 15 Edward III–5 Henry V* (London, 1916), p. 326; Shelagh Mitchell, 'Richard II, kingship and the cult of saints', in Gordon, Monnas and Elam (eds), *The Regal Image of Richard II*, pp. 115–24, at p. 118.

⁴³ Marian Campbell, 'White harts and coronets: the jewellery and plate of Richard II', in Gordon, Monnas and Elam (eds), *The Regal Image of Richard II*, pp. 95–114, at p. 104.

⁴⁴ London, The National Archives, E101/411/9; Jenny Stratford, *Richard II and the English Royal Treasure* (Woodbridge, 2012), pp. 223, 350–1 (R 971).

⁴⁵ Chris Given-Wilson, *Henry IV* (New Haven, CT and London, 2016), p. 405.

⁴⁶ Roy Strong, *Coronation: A History of Kingship and the British Monarchy* (London, 2005), pp. 191–2; Young, *Edmund*, p. 122.

⁴⁷ *The Life of St Edmund King and Martyr*, p. 14 and fo. 6r.

⁴⁸ See, for example, the images of King Alkmund and Queen Siwara, and the image of Sweyn, king of the Danes, landing in England: *The Life of St Edmund King and Martyr*, fo. 10r., 98v.

Diptych, Edmund, wearing a robe of blue and gold and an ermine cloak, is the first in the line of saints presenting Richard to the Virgin Mary, although he is also the furthest of the three saints from the king himself. Each saint carries his distinguishing emblem, in Edmund's case the arrow that symbolised his martyrdom.⁴⁹ More broadly, kings sought other visual reminders of St Edmund's cult, for instance in the form of wall paintings commissioned for royal residences. Henry III ordered a painted image of Edmund, along with St Edward the Confessor, for his chapel at Woodstock (Oxfordshire) in 1233. Here, images of the two saints were to flank a depiction of Christ in Majesty with the four evangelists. Instructions for the painting of an image of the saint were also issued by Henry for his chamber at Brill (Buckinghamshire) in 1245, specifying that the window above the king's bed was to be blocked up in order that a depiction of Edmund standing could be created.⁵⁰ There could be a literary dimension to such activity too, with the writing and translation of lives of the saint within court circles and the establishment of parts of his legend as models for the behaviour of an ideal king.⁵¹

What did rulers gain from such devotional giving and association with the cult of a saint like Edmund? In part, this was bound up with the process of making visible expressions of devotion, in a way that was expected of a king and linked to the aura of religiosity he was expected to convey. This was doubly the case where such activity could be linked to a royal predecessor and a figure who had developed something of a reputation as a national saint.⁵² Rulers also stood to gain in terms of the body of intercessory activity that could be performed on their behalf at the abbey. When Henry VI arrived at Bury in December 1433, for what proved to be a four-month stay accompanied by an extensive court, he was greeted by the abbot and monks in procession and led to the high altar of the abbey while the antiphon for the service of St Edmund was sung. The king then visited the shrine. When he left Bury, on St George's Day (23 April) 1434, he once again visited the shrine with a visible display of devotion to St Edmund and was admitted to the confraternity of the house, thus to become a recipient of regular intercessory prayers. He also took away the promise that he would receive a copy of the *Lives of Saints Edmund and Fremund* by Lydgate, translated from Latin into

⁴⁹ London, The National Gallery, NG4451.

⁵⁰ *Calendar of the Liberate Rolls 1226–1240*, pp. 196–7; *Calendar of the Liberate Rolls 1240–1245*, p. 306.

⁵¹ Scott Waugh, 'Histoire, hagiographie et le souverain idéal à la cour des Plantagenêt', in Martin Aurell and Noël-Yves Tonnerre (eds), *Plantagenêts et Capétiens: confrontations et héritages* (Turnhout, 2006), pp. 429–46, at pp. 435–6.

⁵² On sanctity and the royal bloodline (although Edmund is not discussed), see Anna M. Duch, 'Chasing St Louis: the English monarchy's pursuit of sainthood', in Elena Woodacre, Lucinda H. S. Dean, Chris Jones, Russell E. Martin and Zita Eva Rohr (eds), *The Routledge History of Monarchy* (Abingdon and New York, 2019), pp. 330–51. See also Paul Webster, 'Faith, power and charity: personal religion and kingship in medieval England' in Woodacre, Dean, Jones, Martin and Rohr (eds), *The Routledge History of Monarchy*, pp. 196–212. The argument for Edmund as a saint for the English nation across the Middle Ages is made most fully in Young, *Edmund*.

English, which was commissioned for the purpose at the time of the king's departure and was finished and presented to him in 1439. This provided a physical and visual reminder of his time in the abbey and of the life of the saint. Lydgate himself would appear to have been rewarded with a royal pension.⁵³

Meanwhile, it is a well-established fact of Edmund's cult that the kings of England took the saint with them – in the form of invocations and use of his banner – when they went to war. Here, the circumstances of Edmund's death, fighting the Danes, perhaps explains his appeal as a martial saint, while his status as something of a 'national' saint for England perhaps came to the fore, with a notion that he could be the protector of king, kingdom and people. Both land and sea-going forces fighting in the king's name under Henry II and Richard I did so under banners that sought Edmund's protection for their military activities. In Henry's case, the victory of his supporters at the battle of Fornham St Geneviève (Suffolk) was attributed to the support they received from God and St Edmund, whose banner they carried into battle. Here, the support of Edmund for the king's forces against rebels on the saint's lands, indeed within sight of Bury St Edmunds abbey, trumped the invocation of St Thomas Becket by Henry II's opponents, acting in the name of the king's eldest son, Henry the Young King.⁵⁴ The two saints could, however, be invoked together. In 1190, Richard sought the protection of St Edmund, St Thomas Becket and St Nicholas for his crusading fleet. He went on to present Bury St Edmunds abbey with the banner he captured from the Cypriot ruler Isaac Comnenus in 1191.⁵⁵ An association of the saint with Richard's sea-going forces was appropriate in the light of Edmund's reputation as a protector of those in peril at sea, also an attribute of Becket. Earlier in the twelfth century, in 1131, Henry I had promised to seek Edmund's protection, and to abandon the collection of Danegeld, during a particularly rough Channel-crossing.⁵⁶

Invocation of the saint was still part of royal warfare in the late thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Edward I and Eleanor of Castile came to Bury St Edmunds in 1275 after their return from crusade, having made a vow to do so while in the Holy Land. They returned in

⁵³ *The Life of St Edmund King and Martyr*, pp. 1–2, 14; Craven Ord (ed.), 'Account of the entertainment of King Henry the sixth at the abbey of Bury St Edmunds', *Archaeologia*, 15 (1806), pp. 65–71; Young, Edmund, pp. 114–15; Bertram Wolffe, *Henry VI* (New Haven CT and London, 1981), pp. 74–5. Fremund was said to have been a relative of Edmund, as well as of Offa, king of Mercia. A hermit, he was martyred by a further kinsman, along with members of the Danish army who killed Edmund: Farmer, *Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, p. 195.

⁵⁴ Young, *Edmund*, pp. 101–2; Matthew Strickland, *Henry the Young King 1155–1183* (New Haven, CT and London, 2016), pp. 176–7. Fornham lies just over two miles to the north of Bury St Edmunds.

⁵⁵ Gransden, *A History of the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds 1182–1256*, p. 63; John Gillingham, *Richard I* (New Haven, CT and London, 1999), p. 147.

⁵⁶ Bates, 'The abbey and the Norman Conquest', p. 11. For a summary of evidence linked to St Thomas Becket's reputation as a worker of miracles linked to the dangers posed by water, see Alyce A. Jordan, 'The St Thomas Becket windows at Angers and Coutances: devotion, subversion and the Scottish connection', in Paul Webster and Marie-Pierre Gelin (eds), *The Cult of St Thomas Becket in the Plantagenet World, c.1170–c.1220* (Woodbridge, 2016), pp. 171–207, at pp. 188–9.

association with Edward's Welsh and Scottish campaigns in the decades that followed. For instance, in 1285, Edward, Eleanor of Castile and their three daughters came to Bury 'to fulfil a vow made to God and St Edmund' while campaigning in Wales, arriving 'with deep devotion and reverence'.⁵⁷ Edward went on to visit Bury six times between 1296 and 1300. In 1296, he arrived in January before setting out for Scotland and 'feasted the convent lavishly and generously'. Later in the year, Edward received the submission of defeated opponents at Bury, on St Edmund's feast day (20 November), 'at the hour when the king was attending high mass'. As a result, 'the king gave due thanks to the martyr . . . and made offerings with humble devotion'. Similarly, Henry VI received submissions at Bury in 1449.⁵⁸ Edward I reportedly suggested that he believed the saint would be directly involved in supporting his campaigns against the Scots. In 1300, Edward is said to have told one of his justices that he had 'no doubt that he [St Edmund] will be in Scotland to protect me and mine, and to conquer the enemy; he will come wearing flashing armour much better prepared than you'. On the same visit to Bury St Edmunds, Edward behaved with great reverence: 'never had he appeared more gracious to the church and convent'. He commended himself to the prayers of the monastic community. A few days after his departure he sent his standard back to the abbey for the prior and convent to celebrate mass over it, and for it to be touched with all the abbey's relics, before the campaign could proceed.⁵⁹

Appealing to Edmund as a warrior saint remained important even as the cult of St George began to emerge to prominence, and in the fifteenth-century pre-eminence, as one associated with England and the English. Banners variously of St George, St Edward the Confessor and St Edmund were commissioned by Edward III in 1331–2.⁶⁰ Edward, who did so much to promote George's cult, led his men against a French attack on Calais, in 1349, with battle cries that invoked both saints, while the arms of St Edmund were prominently displayed following Henry V's return to London after his victory at Agincourt in 1415. On the latter occasion, it seems possible that Edmund was among the figures chosen for twelve men dressed as 'kings of the English succession, martyrs and confessors' who, joined by a further twelve men dressed as the apostles, performed psalms for the king at Cheapside.⁶¹

Several kings made use of the banner of St Edmund, including Edward I, while Richard II commissioned banners that included the saint's arms in

⁵⁷ Gransden (ed. and trans.), *Chronicle of Bury*, pp. 57–8, 83–4.

⁵⁸ Gransden (ed. and trans.), *Chronicle of Bury*, pp. 130, 133, 135–6, 148; Antonia Gransden, 'John de Northwold, abbot of Bury St Edmunds (1279–1301) and his defence of its liberties', in P. R. Coss and S. D. Lloyd (eds), *Thirteenth Century England III: Proceedings of the Newcastle upon Tyne Conference 1989* (Woodbridge, 1991), pp. 91–112, at p. 111; Young, *Edmund*, p. 103.

⁵⁹ Gransden (ed. and trans.), *Chronicle of Bury*, pp. 156–7; Gransden, 'John de Northwold', p. 111.

⁶⁰ W. Mark Ormrod, *Edward III* (New Haven, CT and London, 2013), p. 158.

⁶¹ Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?*, pp. 230–1; Frank Taylor and John S. Roskell (ed. and trans.), *Gesta Henrici Quinti: The Deeds of Henry the Fifth*, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1975), pp. 106–7; Young, *Edmund*, p. 104.

the mid-1380s, perhaps for the Scottish campaign of 1385. At some point after 1388, Westminster abbey was presented with three banners of the arms of St Edward, St Edmund and the Holy Roman Emperor, to whom Richard was related through his marriage to Anne of Bohemia, daughter of the Emperor Charles IV and sister of Wenceslas IV of Bohemia.⁶² Richard adopted Edmund's arms in association with his title of lord of Ireland, and in 1386 allowed Robert de Vere, who had been created marquess of Dublin, to bear Edmund's arms 'so long as he lives and has the land and lordship of Ireland'.⁶³

Despite this extensive evidence of devotion, not all royal gifts in honour of St Edmund were as straightforward as they might seem. In 1095, as members of his court questioned the incorrupt state of Edmund's body, William Rufus was grudgingly persuaded to permit the translation of the saint's relics, but forbade the consecration of the newly built east end of the abbey church.⁶⁴ In 1203, King John issued a grant for ten marks to be paid annually to Bury St Edmunds abbey for the repair of Edmund's shrine. Evidence from later in the reign suggests that the sum was paid. However, it was made in place of a royal offering of a ruby and sapphire. Though he had nominally given these in Edmund's honour, John opted to retain them during his lifetime, to be handed over upon his death. It seems that they were returned to Bury. In 1234, Henry III requested that the abbey loan the sapphire previously in John's care to William IV, earl of Warenne.⁶⁵

In addition, relations between the religious community at Bury and the crown did not always run smoothly. St Edmund could be a vengeful saint. One of his foremost miracles involved an apparition in which he was said to have appeared and to have stabbed to death the Anglo-Danish ruler, Swein Forkbeard, with a spear. This 'became Edmund's defining miracle, establishing him as a defender of English rights and a fearsome adversary'. It also came to be depicted on the saint's shrine.⁶⁶ It was not the only example of Edmund's revenge. One member of Edward the Confessor's household went mad at the saint's instigation after entering

⁶² For Edward I: Young, *Edmund*, pp. 103–4. For Richard II: London, The National Archives, E101/401/5; London, The National Archives, E101/401/15. The banners given to Westminster are recorded as a gift of Richard II, added as an addition to an inventory of the abbey's vestry made in 1388: J. Wickham Legg, 'On an inventory of the vestry in Westminster abbey, taken in 1388', *Archaeologia*, 52 (1890), pp. 195–286, at p. 227.

⁶³ *Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office, Richard II, A.D. 1385–1389* (London, 1900), p. 78; Adrian Ailes, 'Heraldry in medieval England: symbols of politics and propaganda', in Peter Coss and Maurice Keen (eds), *Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2002), pp. 83–104, at p. 98; Young, *Edmund*, p. 101.

⁶⁴ John Crook, *English Medieval Shrines* (Woodbridge, 2011), p. 146.

⁶⁵ Thomas Duffus Hardy (ed.), *Rotuli Litterarum Patentium in Turri Londinensi asservati*, I.1: 1199–1216 (London, 1835), p. 37b; Hardy (ed.), *Rotuli Chartarum*, p. 114b; Thomas Duffus Hardy (ed.), *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum in Turri Londinensi asservati*, I: 1204–1224 (London, 1833), pp. 125b, 153b, 176a; *Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office. Henry III. 1232–1247* (London, 1906), p. 43.

⁶⁶ Young, *Edmund*, pp. 16, 87–8.

the church at Bury brandishing an axe.⁶⁷ The death of King Stephen's son Eustace, in 1153, was said to have been St Edmund's retribution for attacks mounted on the abbey's lands.⁶⁸ In addition, the enduring nature of the legend of the death of Swein at the saint's hands is shown in the account of a vision said to have been experienced by Edward I in 1291. In the context of the king's efforts to secure revenues from monastic communities, and the abbot of Bury, John de Northwold's failing efforts to recover royal favour, the king's vision involved St Edmund threatening him with the same fate as Swein. Edward relented: there was every incentive to rulers to respect the saint and what were perceived to be his rights, as well as to honour Edmund and seek his intercession.⁶⁹

St Edmund could also be a saint to whom the king might give, but from whom a ruler or his agents might be unwilling to take away. When Richard I's ransom was being collected in 1193, 'there was not one treasure in England that was not given or exchanged for money, and yet the shrine of St Edmund remained intact'. Abbot Samson told officials to take from the shrine if they dared, with fear of the saint's potential retribution sufficient to ensure that 'the shrine was not despoiled, nor was a loan raised on it'. Other gifts to the abbey did find their way into the ransom collectors' hands, with Eleanor of Aquitaine recovering a chalice, originally given to her by the abbey, but returned in honour of the soul of Henry II. Eleanor restored the object to Bury, but not before securing a commitment 'that we would never again allow the chalice out of the church's possession for any reason whatsoever'.⁷⁰

Further evidence of tensions in the relationship between crown and saint can be found. Not all monarchs emulated Edward I's behaviour in 1294, when the king 'came with pious devotion' to Bury, stayed for a night, and departed having 'entertained the convent with great magnificence and generosity'.⁷¹ Jocelin of Brakelond complained bitterly of King John's reluctance to pay his way.⁷² Henry VI was entertained at the abbey for several months between Christmas 1433 and Easter 1444, as a means by which his household could save money.⁷³ Meanwhile, the prior and convent of the abbey sometimes fell into dispute with the king at the time of abbatial elections. King John's reign provides the most famous example, with protracted dispute surrounding the choice of a successor to Abbot Samson, who died in 1211. Hugh de Northwold was elected

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 91.

⁶⁸ Edmund King, 'Eustace, count of Boulogne (c.1129–1153)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2013) <<https://doi-org.abc.cardiff.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/46704>> [accessed 23 Dec. 2019].

⁶⁹ Gransden, 'John de Northwold', pp. 91–2.

⁷⁰ Greenway and Sayers (trans.), *Jocelin of Brakelond*, pp. 42, 86; Young, *Edmund*, p. 107.

⁷¹ Gransden (ed. and trans.), *Chronicle of Bury*, p. 118.

⁷² Greenway and Sayers (trans.), *Jocelin of Brakelond*, pp. 102–3.

⁷³ *The Life of St Edmund King and Martyr*, p. 1; Ord (ed.), 'Account of the entertainment of King Henry the sixth', pp. 66–71; Wolfe, *Henry VI*, pp. 74–5.

in 1213 but not confirmed in office until 1215.⁷⁴ During the standoff that developed in the intervening period, the king visited the abbey in 1214, negotiating with the monks in their chapter house. The account of the election records John informing the monks that he came to meet them ‘after performing my pilgrimage’ to the saint’s shrine. This itself was similar to the way in which the assembly of barons that took place at Bury in autumn 1214 was described, a meeting that in fact provided cover for discussions among those who would go on to defy John’s rule in the process that led to the agreement of Magna Carta the following year.⁷⁵ Yet it may be argued that John did not come to Bury in a peaceful and penitent mood in 1214. He entered the chapter house with his sword carried before him, and threatened the monks that if they did not fall in with his wishes, the abbey would be ‘likely in course of time to fall into poverty’, its reputation would be ‘besmirched’ and the monks would ‘incur your ruler’s hatred’. The majority of the monks nonetheless held out for their preferred candidate, Hugh de Northwold, and this ‘party of truth, protected by the merits of Mary . . . and of their blessed patron Edmund . . . were revisited with renewed spiritual strength’. The account of Hugh’s election even suggested that the monks were prepared to ‘shed their blood’ for his cause, while the king departed ‘barring threats’.⁷⁶

When the cult of the saints was swept away in England in the reign of Henry VIII, two final pieces of evidence confirm the enduring – and complex – nature of the link between royal figures and the cult of St Edmund. In 1533, as the events surrounding Henry VIII’s divorce and the break with Rome unfolded, the king’s sister, Mary, died. In dispute with the king over his marriage to Anne Boleyn, Mary was buried at Bury St Edmunds abbey, before her body was moved to St Mary’s Church, on her brother’s orders, following the abbey’s surrender to the king’s dissolution commissioners in 1538. She had been queen of France for just under three months prior to the death of Louis XII on 1 January 1515, then duchess of Suffolk from 1515 until her death, through her subsequent marriage to Charles Brandon.⁷⁷ Meanwhile, the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, the survey commissioned by the king to determine the extent of the wealth coming into his hands as a result of dissolving the monasteries, noted instances where communities were commemorating the Tudor ruler’s predecessors. At Bury St Edmunds, Richard I, John and Edward III were among those remembered as donors.⁷⁸ Beyond the Reformation, Edmund could still

⁷⁴ Gransden, *A History of the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds 1182–1256*, p. 151, with a full discussion of the election at pp. 151–64.

⁷⁵ R. M. Thomson (ed. and trans.), *The Chronicle of the Election of Hugh Abbot of Bury St Edmunds and later Bishop of Ely* (Oxford, 1974), pp. 118–19; Hewlett (ed.), *Rogeri de Wendover*, II, p. 111; David Carpenter, *Magna Carta* (London, 2015), pp. 290–5.

⁷⁶ Thomson (ed.), *Chronicle of the Election of Hugh*, pp. 118–27.

⁷⁷ David Loades, ‘Mary (1496–1533)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2008) <<https://doi-org.abc.cardiff.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/18251>> [accessed 23 Dec. 2019]; Young, *Edmund*, pp. 122, 149.

⁷⁸ John Caley and Joseph Hunter (eds), *Valor Ecclesiasticus temp. Henr. VIII auctoritate regia institutus*, 6 vols (London, 1810–34), III, pp. 461–4.

be a focus for royal veneration, albeit seen in the activities of the Stuart monarchs in exile. King James II turned the Priory of St Edmund, in Paris, 'into a sort of royal church for the exiled court'. James' body lay in this house from his death in 1701 down to the period of the French Revolution.⁷⁹

Overall, the evidence reveals a long-standing association between the rulers of England and the cult of St Edmund, King and Martyr, and the shrine at the abbey of Bury St Edmunds, ranging from the early establishment of the cult through almost as far as the Reformation and – in the case of the Stuart rulers in exile – beyond. Although it was not a relationship that always ran smoothly, as the wishes of the crown came into conflict with an abbey that was itself an economic powerhouse with its own aims, ambitions and perceived and documented rights to preserve, nonetheless the saint had an important part to play in the devotional activity of medieval rulers. Kings made gifts to the abbey in honour of the saint. They visited the shrine – sometimes on Edmund's feast day – in order to pray, make offerings, secure blessing and seek intercession for their endeavours. In some cases they named their children after St Edmund, while when the occasion demanded they sought to take the saint with them to war, an aspect of intercession sometimes viewed as very real intervention by the saint. Edmund was a royal saint who was seen to intercede for his royal successors. In their devotional activity, then, are we looking at an exercise in the promotion of sanctified royalty and the cultivation of a national English saint? Perhaps, but if so this was not to the exclusion of other cults, royal or otherwise. Rulers sought the intercession of Edmund alongside other important saints, including St Thomas Becket, St Edward the Confessor and, in the later Middle Ages, St George, not to mention the various cults and shrine sites of East Anglia to which kings might travel after their visits to Bury St Edmunds. In many ways the endurance of the cult speaks volumes of Edmund's adaptability as a saint and also of a sense in which this was a cult that was perceived to work as an intercessory force. It did so as part of a broad range of saintly forces to whom the rulers of England felt it worthwhile to appeal.

⁷⁹ Young, *Edmund*, p. 130.