

*Arcadian Club*  
*Scarning*



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*No. 7*

Agustus Jessopp was at the heart of life as it existed then and saw the need to nurture local village activities which in Scarning's case, culminated in the raising of funds to build the village hall.

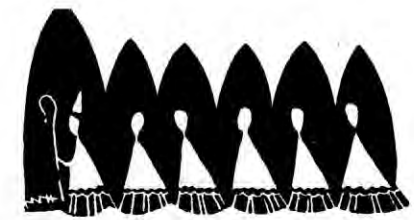
Today, there is however, a growing tendency for a fresh look at village life which has changed drastically in recent years, with computers, and second home buyers moving into the countryside, and it is felt that village halls should again be encouraged to offer a greater range of activities to meet modern needs such as Playgroups and Learning Centres. Indeed, lottery grants are awarded for improvements to facilities and new halls have been erected at places such as Yaxham and more recently at Binham, to name but two.

Perhaps we are coming back to the idea that togetherness is more important than isolationism? Who knows? The stress of modern living has to be relieved and with the decline in the importance of rural life high on the agenda, efforts are stirring to rectify the imbalance that has occurred in the recent past.

David Bunting



The next meeting of the Arcadian Club will be held in Scarning Village Hall on Saturday, 6<sup>th</sup> October at 7.30pm



## Bury St. Edmunds

**M**OST OF US at some time, have visited Bury St. Edmunds and would agree that it is a fine town with an historical history. But who was St. Edmunds?

On Friday, 25<sup>th</sup> July 1884, Dr. Jessopp stood in the ruined cloisters of St. Edmunds Abbey and delivered an address on its early history to an interested group of listeners. This talk was later reproduced as one of his essays. It reveals his passion for research into the past and I have of necessity strung along selected passages in a sequence, which I hope you will find interesting.

He begins by saying they are assembled on a spot where nearly nine hundred years ago the daily life of one of the great English monasteries was carried on. The former settlement was known as Bedericsworth and consisted of half a dozen beggarly hovels and something like a church, constructed of the trees that were growing thereabouts.

They gained a livelihood by tilling the soil and using the stream to turn the mill which ground the corn; and they

cleaned the scrub and stubbed up the old roots; whereas everybody else was quarrelling and fighting, they were men of peace and, strangest of all, men of prayer.

These first colonists were the first monks of Bury, and King Sigebert joined them. The monks kept up a devout life and for two hundred years or so, they were the quiet teachers and educators of the Suffolk people till the terrible Danes came and settled in East Anglia in 867.

## Thoughts from Holkham



Time goes quickly. It is almost six years since Fred and I first made contact over our mutual interest in the life and work of Augustus Jessopp which resulted in the first meeting in Scarning Village Hall in May 1996.

Since the formation of our small group, we have learned far more regarding the career of Augustus Jessopp as a Headmaster, Parish Priest and Antiquarian writer of some repute, and over the past five years we have delved into his background, upbringing, family ties, and many other interesting features of his wide ranging intellectual character.

His knowledge of Norfolk's history has been a special feature of our discussions and I am sure all of us know far more about a man who spent over fifty years in Norfolk, twenty years as a Headmaster and thirty years at Scarning as a Rector, in the late nineteenth century.

One of Dr. Jessopp's finest moments at Scarning came in 1902 when the Village Hall was opened with much ceremony, Many of Norfolk's leading figures of the day, including Henry Rider Haggard, attended the Grand opening.



2002 will mark the centenary of this event and it is hoped a Special Service and get together will be held to commemorate 100 years of Scarning Village Hall.

The building of the village hall was a feature of Victorian life and many sprang up all over England for the use of the parishioners to get together, and acted as a central point for village activity. Many were built during a long period of agricultural depression and acted as an uplift in spirits at a time when life was hard economically and financially for many, and many villagers were able to escape from the rigours of daily life.

Many were able to forget their difficulties and engage in dancing, Whist Drives and other social activities. Many village halls were described as reading rooms, where locals could read newspapers, books and periodicals provided by the Lord of the Manor or other leading local figures.

Many could read, following the compulsory Education Act of 1870 although few could afford to purchase newspapers or books of their own.

Throughout the twentieth century there has been a fall in the importance of village halls. Television and the car have allowed a wider range of interests which has drawn people away from village activity on the same scale that existed in Jessopp's time. A real community spirit existed then; villages were self-supporting; residents stayed in the same locality most of their lives, married locally, and worked for one employer until retirement.

Edmund, whom men call St. Edmund, was the King of East Anglia at that time. It may be that the monks of Bedericsworth had taught him; he was certainly a Christian; as a Christian he took up arms against the Danish marauders, fought a battle, was beaten and was slaughtered.

The death of St. Edmund points to the fact that his war with the Northern pirates was to some extent, a religious war, and when the Danes gained the day, they set to work to put down all the Christian strongholds in the land.

Bedericsworth had grown to be a place of note in the little kingdom and the monastery on this very spot had become a place capable of defence. But the Danes carried all before them; they stormed one religious house after another, slew the monks, burnt the houses and reduced the church to ruins. This was the first

suppression of the monasteries in East Anglia.

For the next hundred years, the spot on which we stand must have presented on a small scale, much the same appearance that it does now on a large scale.

At the beginning of the eleventh century certain clergy bound themselves together to govern their daily lives by a certain rule and to submit to the discipline that the rule prescribed. These men became known as *Canonici* and gradually the word became changed to the everyday word of Canon.

These Canons lived almost exactly as the Canons of Ely and Norwich do in the cathedral closes at this moment. Live as they might, they were fathers of families and the old awe and halo that

surrounded the monastery when all the inmates were

unmarried somehow faded, almost vanished.

The feelings of the times were against clergymen being married and it ended with the Canons being turned out.

King Cnut (*sic*) was King of England now and he had founded the great Abbey at St. Benet's Hulm, in the stagnant swamps – dreary, cold, damp, and aguish among the Norfolk Broads. The very horribleness of this place instead of repelling men of faith attracted them. Let me remind you that the *raison d'etre* of the monk was not teaching and preaching, but living.

The Abbey of St. Benets filled at a surprising rate. King Cnut gave the word. The Canons of Bury St. Edmunds were ejected and a colony of twelve monks from St. Benets took their place.

Thus the Abbey of St. Edmunds sprang into being, renewed its life, or began a second life with large endowments to support them.

King Cnut, the sovereign of England, Norway and Denmark, was the founder of this great Abbey of St. Edmund half a century before the Norman Conquest and it was he who settled monks once more in the old spot after the first suppression of the monasteries in East Anglia.

The cloister was a quadrangle, whose outer walls you may easily trace from where we are now standing. From ten to twelve feet inside the outer wall ran an arcade, which in King Cnut's day was open to the air. Between these two walls at a later date, stretched a roof that was almost certainly glazed with the most glorious stained glass windows.





Dr. Jessopp continues at this point, to give a very detailed and fascinating description of the old Abbey, which is to be found in his book 'Studies by a Recluse in Cloister, Town and Country.' He describes the school for boys and a grass plot with its well or fountain and states that when the church stood up in its glory, it was 100 feet longer than Norwich Cathedral, 20 feet longer than York and only 9 feet shorter than Canterbury.

Fifty years after King Cnut's days came the Norman Conquest, by which the abbey gained rather than lost – gained in wealth and power. Yet one hundred and fifty years later, it was in a very bad way indeed. There had been gross mismanagement and the Abbey was heavily in debt until the time of Abbot Sampson who ruled over the Abbey for 33 years during which time he rectified the situation.

In 1257 there were fearful floods followed by famine and pestilence with two thousand people dying within the year in Bury. Six years later, there was war between the Barons and Henry III. Bishop Simon of Norwich who had taken the wrong side, fled to Bury for refuge and three years later, the abbey was turned into the last great stronghold against the Royal arms. For this, the abbey was heavily fined.

Five years later in 1272 King Henry III died within the Abbey walls. Twenty-four years later, Edward I held a Parliament here. Then thirty years later came another crisis. Queen Isabella, the consort of Edward II and mother of Edward III landed at Harwich with a force of foreign mercenaries, with the avowed intention of thrusting her husband from the throne. She and her armies rested here for a while – the abbey doubtless being thronged by the great ones and the town swarming

with the rank and file of the invading force.

Rebellion was in the air and the townsmen of Bury rebelled against the Lord Abbot. The mob looted the place; they robbed and burnt and destroyed. Significantly, there were country parsons among the rioters. There had never been any cordiality between the country parsons and the religious orders. Indeed the monasteries had already lost a great deal of their *religious* character and business relations brought the monks face to face with people.

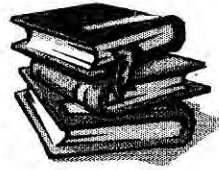
Dr. Jessopp says that like one of those enormous trees which you may see in a primaeval forest, the great abbey had been spreading forth its branches far and wide, not helping others to grow, but keeping them down. Yet when the axe was laid to the root of the tree it had never looked more magnificent.

It is described as '*a city, so many gates there are in it, and some of brass, and so many towers, and a most stately church, upon which attended three others also, standing gloriously in one and the same churchyard, all of passing fine and curious workmanship.*'

And so this place was doomed when the Act of Parliament was passed for the dissolution of the monasteries. All the splendour and the pomp has passed away; the treasure and the jewels and the gold were scrambled for by ruffians, wasted upon debauchery and riot. The old order is for ever changing. . . But no! We cannot put back the clock, which will move on. The past has gone. It has left us with some things to regret, some things we would fain recover.

The great law of progress with its irresistible force pushes us onwards, admits of no loitering, forbids all going back. FEH

## Studies by a Recluse in Cloister, Town and Country



I have recently been 'dipping' again into Dr. Jessopp's book with the imposing title of 'Studies by a Recluse in Cloister, Town and Country. That is one of the attractions of his writings in that they can be read and re-read over and over again and there is always a new point to find that will arouse one's interest. Often his books are collections of essays or lectures, which he has given and which throw a light on past events leading up to his time, and often, show his compassion for the hard times endured by the peasantry.

He denies that he is a historian and states that he had neither the time nor the money to carry out his researches to his own satisfaction but it is his wide understanding of humanity that brings to life the history of the past as he reveals it.

In my own copy of this particular book, there is a separate leaflet which he included with each copy sold, and which will raise a fellow feeling in the heart of everyone who has ever served on a Parochial Church Council, namely finding the resources for maintaining the fabric of a church so that it may be passed on to future generations in good order!

I quote some of the relevant passages overleaf.

' THIRTY-THREE YEARS ago the Church of this parish was in so dilapidated a condition that the roof was in danger of falling in, and to avert the threatened collapse, a great effort was made. A new roof was put upon the building, and such essential repairs were carried out as could not safely be neglected any longer. The tower, the masonry of the walls and the buttresses, were left for another generation to deal with.

The Church tower – a very fine one – the outer walls and their buttresses, and other parts of the fabric are now showing unmistakable signs of the process of decay, and it falls upon me as Rector of the Parish to attempt the completion of the work left unfinished by my predecessors.

Dr. Jessopp goes on to say, 'If I had the means I should do it myself, and thank God that I was permitted to carry out such work. Unfortunately, I am not in a position to sacrifice three years income of my benefice, and I am sorry I am not.

Under the circumstances I have resolved on adopting a somewhat unusual course. If they who have derived any pleasure, or instruction from my writings will kindly contribute not less than half a crown in furtherance of the object I have at heart, and send me such contribution in any way most convenient to themselves, they will relieve me from a burden of anxiety, and lay me under a debt of gratitude.'

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## SCARNING VILLAGE HALL

*The following is the monthly report of Dr. A. Jessopp in the Parish Magazine for June 1902*

The Block of Buildings which represent the new Foundation of Scarning Village Hall and its belongings, is rapidly approaching completion. The arrangements for the opening of the Hall will be found below.

It is hoped that on this occasion – which will be an event of real importance in the History of the Parish – many of the inhabitants will attend the service in the church at half-past two, when not only the Lord Bishop of Norwich will be present, but the Bishop of Thetford and Ipswich also.

Perhaps never before have three Bishops been in Scarning Church at the same time. The service in the Church will be short and very simple. There will be no sermons.

The four front rows of chairs in the hall will be reserved for visitors coming from a distance.

Of course, *Good Manners* require that our guests be provided with seats before we, the Scarning folk, crowd in.

May the weather be fine and sunny, and the day a glad and happy day for all.