

THE BURY ST EDMUNDS PAGEANT OF 1907

There were 7 episodes, plus a Prologue and "Final Tableau".

Prologue

This featured a "narrative chorus" of the ancient kings of East Anglia, processing through the gardens of a Roman villa.

Episode I – Villa Faustini, 61AD

This scene featured Boudica, or Boadicea, queen of the Iceni tribe. She and her tribe were shown slaying many Romans, including the governor Faustinus.

Episode II

There were two scenes in this episode, one set in 855 and the second in 870. The second depicted the martyrdom of Edmund, killed by arrows being fired into his body.

Episode III – Twilight, 903-1095

This episode contained five scenes from the tenth and eleventh centuries, featuring, among others, kings Canute, Edward the Confessor and Henry I, Saxon abbots and bishops, and crowds of early medieval Bury St Edmunds townsfolk.

Episode IV – Abbot Samson, 1182-1211

In ten shorter scenes, the pageant depicted the deeds of one of Bury St Edmunds's most important abbots. Samson led the abbey during the tumultuous reigns of Richard I and John, both of whom appeared in the episode.

Episode V – "Magna Charta", 1214

Here 25 barons were portrayed discussing the errant king John, and pledging themselves to Magna Carta.

Episode VI – Duke Humphrey, 1433-1447

This episode focused on the events surrounding the death of Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, in 1447, and was based on Shakespeare's Henry VI, Part II.

Episode VII – "The New Age", 1533-1578

The scenes in this last episode involved folk dancing and merriment, celebrating the founding of a grammar school in Bury St Edmunds by king Edward VI, and ending - as many pageants did - with a visit to the town by Elizabeth I.

Final Tableau

This finale showed queen Elizabeth getting up from her throne to join the other kings and queens, and a final chorus was sung, followed by the national anthem. The pageant ended with a march featuring the whole cast.

Right: Sir Robert Fitzwalter reads the Charter to the Barons in episode V.

Source: From a watercolour drawing by W. Dacres Adams in *Connoisseur Magazine* (1907). Reproduced by kind permission of the St Edmundsbury Heritage Service.

Far Right: King John, in episode IV, played by Horace Ross Barker (1863-1941) of 41 Northgate Street, Bury St Edmunds. Barker was Curator of Moyse's Hall Museum between 1899 and 1933

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BURY ST EDMUNDS IN 1907

As a small town with a long and interesting history, Bury St Edmunds was fairly typical of the places that staged the most successful pageants in the Edwardian years. The population in 1907 was just over 16,000, reflecting Victorian expansion and ongoing urban development. The town was changing. In 1900, the new electrical works were completed, and before long there were three cinemas in the town.

The pageant was one part of a wider effort to attract visitors to Bury St Edmunds. In 1909 the Town Improvement Committee was established, with the aim of opening the abbey gardens to the public. This aim was achieved in 1912. Other developments in this period included the establishment of the new diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, with the bishop enthroned at St James's church – now

a cathedral – in Bury St Edmunds. The pageant enabled local people, living through a period of change, to examine and enjoy many aspects of their town's history, and to have lots of fun along the way.



Above: Buttermarket, Moyses's Hall, c. 1902.
Reproduced by permission of the Bury St Edmunds Past & Present Society, KS05-0097

PAYING FOR THE PAGEANT IN 1907

The Bury St Edmunds pageant of 1907 was a major event, involving 1,800 performers and with a grandstand seating 4,000. With the cost of props, costumes and advertising, not to mention the rent of the pageant ground and the construction of the grandstand itself, the pageant was an expensive thing to organise. The pageant-master Louis Napoleon Parker was paid a fee of £921 (nearly £100,000 in today's money), and

other staff – including police – were hardly less expensive. In total the pageant cost more than £7,000 to put on, and luckily it was successful enough to make a profit of more than £1,000. The vast majority of the organisation, of course, was done through voluntary effort. *The Times* valued the total amount of voluntary work done, plus the actual outlays of the volunteers, at £100,000 (more than £10m today). These huge

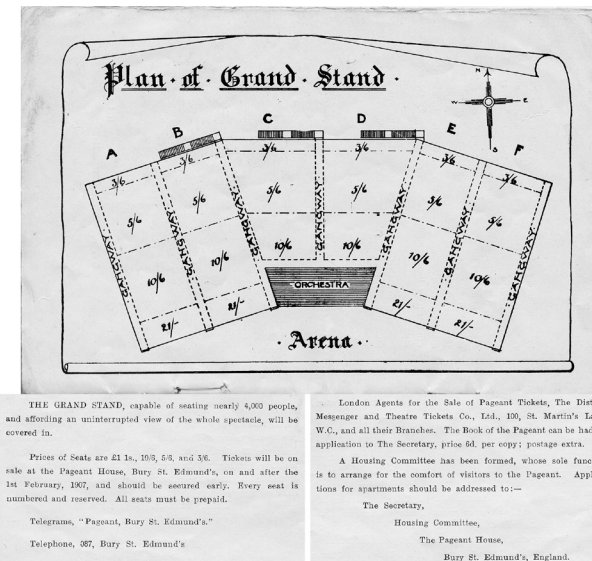
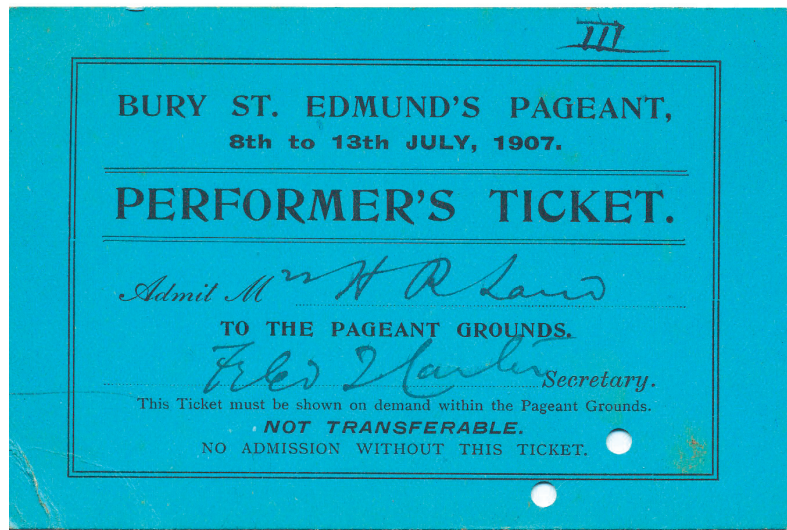
sums are a reminder of the remarkable effort that went into the organisation of historical pageants in twentieth-century Britain.

Right: A performer's ticket to the pageant

Reproduced by kind permission of the St Edmundsbury Heritage Service.

Far Right: Plan of Pageant Grand Stand

Reproduced by kind permission of the St Edmundsbury Heritage Service.



THE GRAND STAND, capable of seating nearly 4,000 people, and affording an uninterrupted view of the whole spectacle, will be covered in.

Prices of Seats are £1 1s., 10s. 5s., and 3s. Tickets will be on sale at the Pageant House, Bury St. Edmund's, on and after the 1st February, 1907, and should be secured early. Every seat is numbered and reserved. All seats must be prepaid.

Telegrams, "Pageant, Bury St. Edmund's."
Telephone, 367, Bury St. Edmund's

London Agents for the Sale of Pageant Tickets, The District Messenger and Theatre Tickets Co., Ltd., 101, St. Martin's Lane, W.C., and all their Branches. The Book of the Pageant can be had on application to The Secretary, price 6d. per copy; postage extra.

A Housing Committee has been formed, whose sole function is to arrange for the comfort of visitors to the Pageant. Applications for apartments should be addressed to:-

The Secretary,
Housing Committee,
The Pageant House,
Bury St. Edmund's, England.

WHERE DID THE MONEY GO AFTER THE 1907 PAGEANT?

When the pageant was over, and the accounts complete, the people of Bury St Edmunds had to decide how to spend the profit that the pageant had made. This was more than £1,000, or nearly £100,000 in today's money. The Pageant Committee put an advert in the *Bury Free Press* inviting the public to have their say. Suggestions included a children's ward at the local hospital, a maintenance fund for the abbey ruins, and even

a golf course. Although the most popular option was something to support the poor of the town, the eventual recommendation was to spend the money on restoring the abbey gateway and acquiring the abbey gardens as a public recreation space. However, when the town council couldn't agree terms for the gardens, it was decided to spend the money on a tuberculosis sanatorium. Tuberculosis was certainly a big problem in

Bury St Edmunds, having accounted for 10 per cent of all deaths in the town in the previous year. In 1909, with the money raised from the pageant, the Bury St Edmunds and West Suffolk Sanatorium was opened.

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Above: Angier's Emulsion (Angier Chemical Company, 1907).

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OTHER EVENTS DURING THE 1907 PAGEANT

Many historical pageants were accompanied by other events which gave the town a chance to show off its best side to visitors, and Bury St Edmunds was no exception. The town council used the occasion for a civic lunch at which the pageant-master and officials had the chance to meet the mayors of other boroughs in East Anglia and various other dignitaries – all at

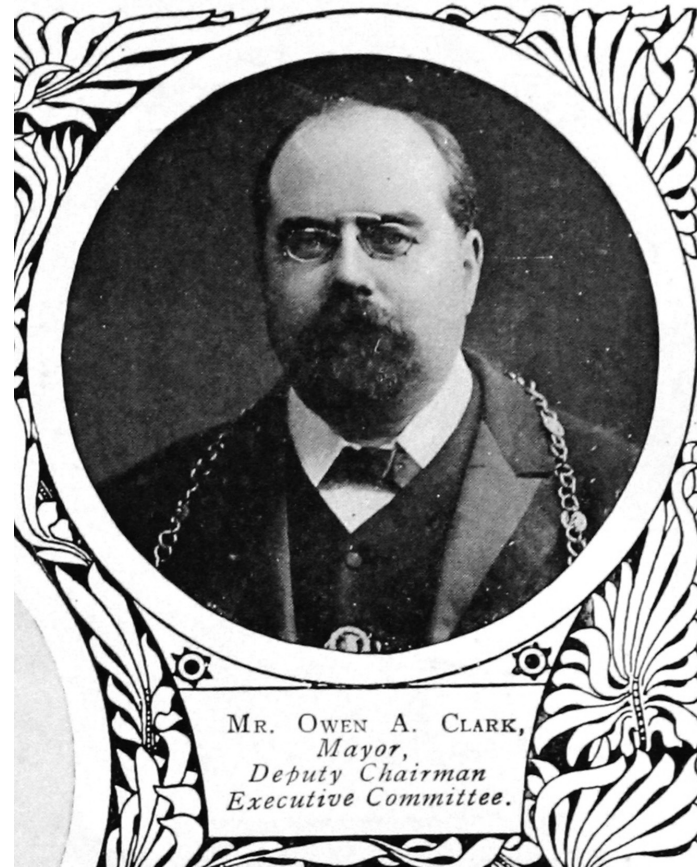
their own expense. Afterwards, the lunchers processed in formation from the Guildhall down Abbeygate Street, and took their seats in the grandstand to watch the pageant. Other events staged alongside the pageant included an exhibition of oils and watercolours by a local artist, Mrs Parker and a programme of music by the full band of the 1st Suffolk Regiment.

Right: Mayor of Bury St Edmunds, Owen A. Clark, who also played Faustinus in episode I: *Connoisseur Magazine* (1907).

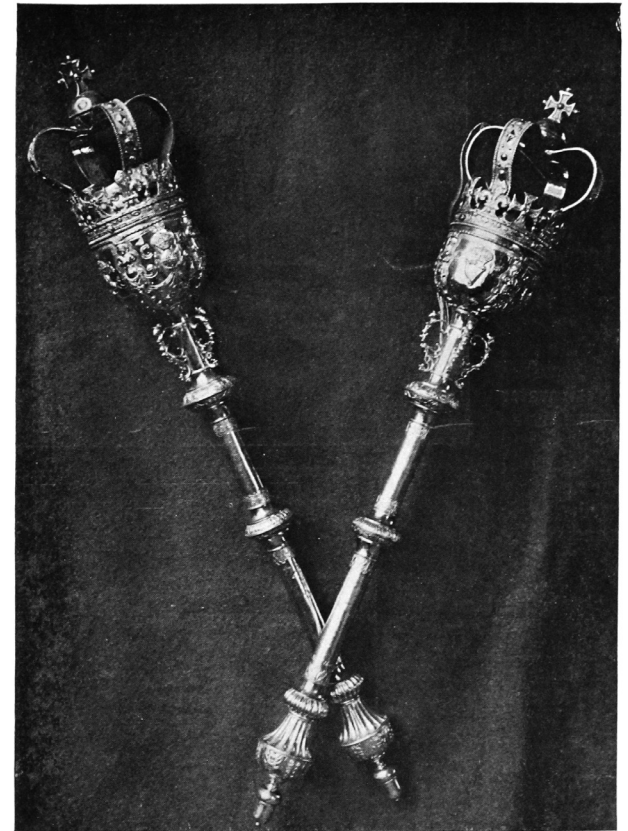
Reproduced by kind permission of the St Edmundsbury Heritage Service.

Far Right: Maces of Bury St Edmunds, used in the civic procession: *Connoisseur Magazine* (1907).

Reproduced by kind permission of the St Edmundsbury Heritage Service.



MR. OWEN A. CLARK,
Mayor,
Deputy Chairman
Executive Committee.



MACES OF BURY ST. EDMUNDS.

THE 1907 PAGEANT IN THE PRESS

The pageant was widely reported in the national and local press. Not only were there reports in the *Bury Free Press* and other Suffolk newspapers, as well as *The Times*, *Daily Express* and other national outlets, but there was also coverage in such distant places as Aberdeen, Sheffield and Cornwall. As one of a number of pageants held in 1907, Bury St Edmunds was competing for attention, but it made a

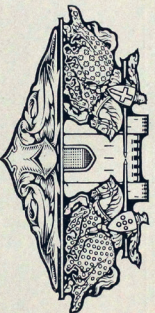
notable impact, and the response was generally favourable. The *Observer* called it “a triumph in pageantry”, and the *Bury Free Press* found it “imposing, glorious, and soul-stirring”. Perhaps the most glowing endorsement from outside the town came from the London correspondent of the *Manchester Courier* and *Lancashire General Advertiser*, who gushed about the pageant: “For the full three hours it held the vast audience

enthralled, and, when it had finished, the mind was filled with vision after vision of lovely colours, animated acting, and the wonderful harmony and story and action... It is a triumph of goodwill and organisation.” Even in this period of widespread “pageant fever”, it seems that something special had happened at Bury St Edmunds.

Connoisseur Special Number
UNDER ROYAL PATRONAGE

BURY ST EDMUNDS PAGEANT

July 8th to July 13th, 1907
Daily at 2.30 p.m.



A Special Luncheon & Dining Car Train

A SPECIAL LUNCHEON CAR TRAIN from St. Pancras to Bury St. Edmunds will be run on WEDNESDAY, JULY 10th, at 11.30 a.m., and Special Dining Car Train for return journey at 6.35 p.m.

A limited number of Tickets for Reserved Seats in the above train, including Luncheon, a Half-Guinea Ticket for Grand Stand, and Dinner on the return journey, will be issued at the inclusive price of £1 : 11 : 6.

For full particulars write to

PAGEANT TRAIN,
The Connoisseur Magazine,
95 Temple Chambers,
Temple Avenue, London, E. C.
VIII.

Above: Advertising for the Bury St Edmunds
Pageant in 1907: *Connoisseur Magazine* (1907)
Reproduced by kind permission of the St Edmundsbury
Heritage Service.

1959 PAGEANT-MASTER CHRISTOPHER EDE

Christopher Ede was a renowned professional pageant-master. He “caught the bug” when he assisted Walter Creighton on the Pageant of Parliament at the Albert Hall in 1934, and then put on his own first pageant at Pyrford Court near Woking, Surrey, in 1937. By the 1950s, he was a leading pageant-master. He wrote and directed the major Three Towns Pageant, held as part of the Festival of Britain in 1951, and

in that same year also helped to revive the Chester mystery plays. Other pageants included the Pageant of Rhodesia (1953) (Rhodesia is now Zimbabwe), the Pageant of Guildford (1957), and the Pageant of Croydon (1960). Ede did not just work on historical pageants: he directed plays, including on Broadway in New York, was the script-writer and director of the light and sound shows known as *son et lumière*,

and wrote handbooks for the theatre, including (with Frank Napier) *Noises Off: A Handbook of Sound Effects*. He was married to the musician Joy Boughton, and had two children, Robin and Penny.



Above: Christopher Ede, renowned
pageant-master of the *Bury St Edmunds
Magna Carta Pageant*.

Source: Bury St. Edmunds Pageant of Magna Carta
(Bury St. Edmunds, 1959). Reproduced by kind
permission of the St Edmundsbury Heritage Service.

FARCICAL SCENE: THE PICKWICK PAPERS IN 1959

The unusual decision was made in the 1959 pageant to include the scene of an election based in the fictional place “Eatanswill”, from *The Pickwick Papers* by Charles Dickens. It is claimed that Eatanswill was based on nearby Sudbury, which is perhaps why the location was chosen. This farcical scene – full of bright colourful characters, fighting, bands, and a generally raucous atmosphere – was probably chosen for its extended opportunity for fun. During the scene, the tourist Guide (a character

who was present in most of the scenes) asks an Englishman if he has ever thought about what an election in England was like, and introduces Dickens’s account of the election at Eatanswill. The arena contains various groups carrying banners and slogans, with some individuals acting aggressively and shouting: the electoral contest between the two candidates, Slumkey and Fizkin, is about to begin. It transpires that Fizkin’s people have locked 33 voters into a pub, getting them drunk to sway their vote, and Slumkey’s team

have bribed 45 women with green parasols. The scene is raucous as the Mayor tries to silence the crowd, to no avail. A vote is taken by show of hands, which the Mayor gives to Slumkey. Fizkin protests and demands a poll, which the Mayor grants; all march off, fights still erupting, as the Mayor goes to see to the necessary arrangements.

Right: Magna Carta Pageant 1959, the election at Eatanswill.

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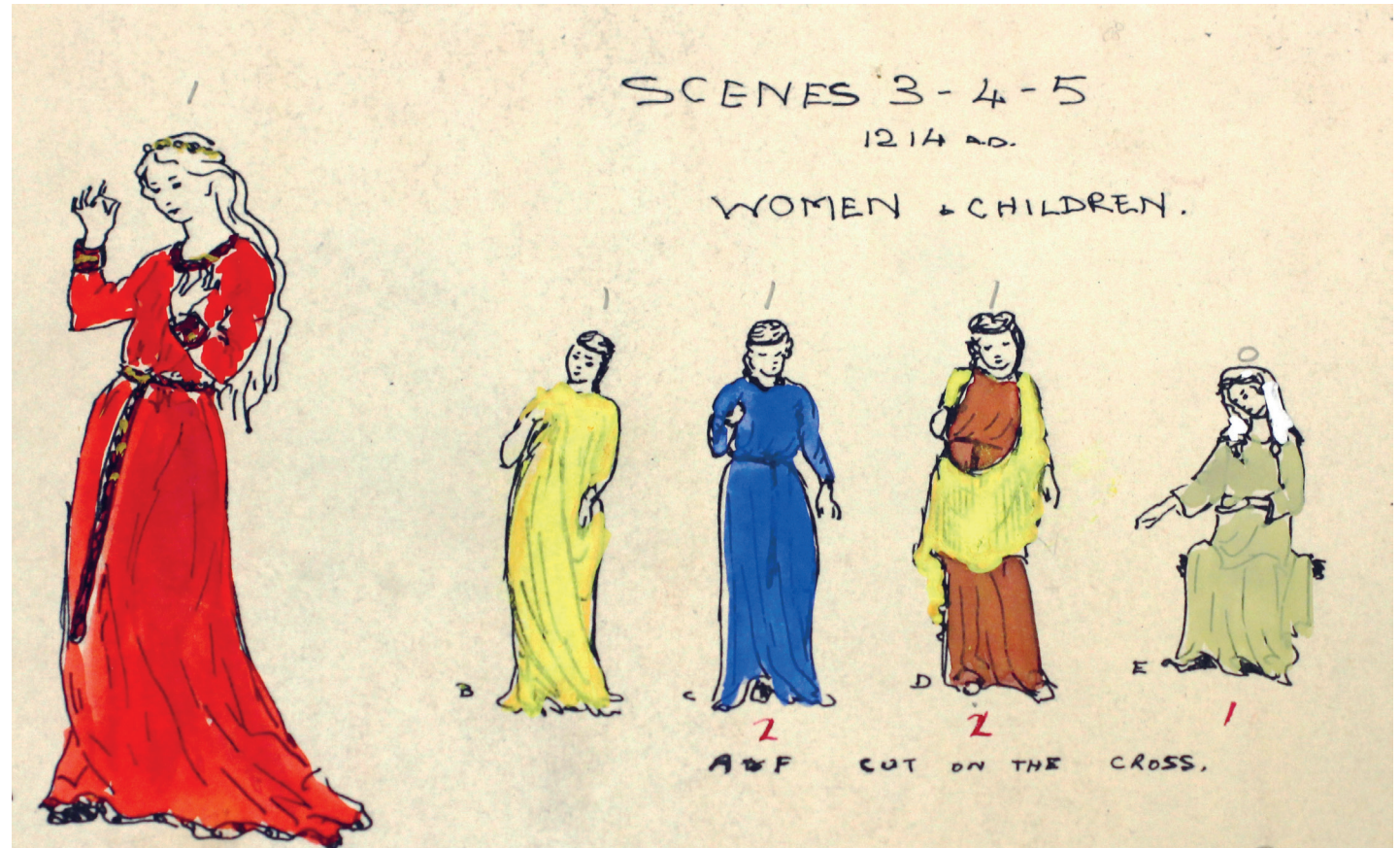
MAKING THE COSTUMES IN 1959

Costumes for pageants were usually made locally and the preparations took many months, sometimes over a year, and often involved a large number of volunteers. The costumes for the 1959 pageant, which included ballet costumes, were designed by Kathleen Primmer, a New Zealand-born artist who had studied in Paris and at the Royal Academy schools, and exhibited in Paris, at the Royal Academy, and the Royal Portrait Gallery, as well as locally in Suffolk. After

taking up dress and costume design, as well as scenery for the stage, she had worked on Inglis Gundry operas. The costumes were made locally and cost £1 198 16s 6d (less an insurance claim for damaged costumes of £51 12s). Some were sold after the end of the celebrations for £175 (the equivalent of around £3,500 today), a sum that was added to the profits of the pageant, which were eventually used to build shelters in the Abbey Gardens.

Right: Costume designs by Kathleen
Primmer for the Bury St Edmunds Magna
Carta Pageant.

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Bury St Edmunds, HD2188/1.



ORGANISING THE PAGEANT IN 1959

Organising a pageant with one thousand performers, an orchestra, 25 horses, a grandstand and a public address system was a massive task. Not only did the pageant itself need to be casted, rehearsed and staged, but the organisers needed to provide costumes, props and scenery, publicise the pageant, take out insurance, and arrange for the event to be filmed and floodlit – this was an evening pageant. To do all this, a large committee was formed, with sub-committees focusing on particular aspects of

the pageant. Each scene had its own “convenor” and producer, and its own wardrobe director, and sometimes a separate stage manager. The total expenditure was over £9,000 (or £180,000 in 2015 prices), and this paled into insignificance compared with the voluntary effort that was expended in the organisation of the pageant. Fees had to be paid to the pageant-master and script-writer, but most of the work that went into the pageant was unpaid.

PAGEANT PRODUCTION STAFF

<i>Design—Setting, Properties and Poster</i>	-	-	-	-	-	ERNEST SCOTT
<i>Heraldry</i>	-	-	-	-	-	ERNEST PAYNE
<i>Adviser on Heraldry</i>	-	-	-	-	-	HAROLD HAWES
<i>Design—Coral costumes and wardrobe supervision</i>	-	-	-	-	-	KATE PRIMMER
— <i>Ballet costumes</i>	-	-	-	-	-	NEVILLE BLACKBURN
— <i>Scene 7</i>	-	-	-	-	-	OLGA IRONSIDE-WOOD
— <i>Scene 8</i>	-	-	-	-	-	- PAT TEANEY
<i>Choreography</i>	-	-	-	-	-	WENDY BARLOW, JOY MULLER, SHEILA GORMAN
<i>Musical Director</i>	-	-	-	-	-	HARRISON OXLEY
<i>Musical Adviser</i>	-	-	-	-	-	ARTHUR COLE
<i>Organist</i>	-	-	-	-	-	NORMAN H. JONES
<i>Music Secretary</i>	-	-	-	-	-	GWEN MOORE
<i>Conceners</i>	-	-	-	-	-	EILEEN ECCLESTONE, DOREEN HOGG, CHRISTINE LOSHAK, GEORGE PEAKE, VERNON WATTEYSON
<i>Sub-Producers</i>	-	-	-	-	-	RALPH AMBROSE, JAMES BRUCE, LENS CARTER, MARGARET HURST, JOAN JENKINS, D. J. P. O'MEARA, JEAN SATURLEY
<i>Chief Marshal</i>	-	-	-	-	-	ARTHUR POTTER
<i>Arms Marshals</i>	-	-	-	-	-	A. W. BRITT, A. F. BUTLER, G. S. BLACKMORE, R. CURST- MONT, W. G. EDWARDS, J. SNELL
<i>Master of Horse</i>	-	-	-	-	-	A. W. DANIELS
<i>Wardrobe Staff</i>	-	-	-	-	-	WINIFRED WHITTING (<i>Chief Cutter</i>), Mrs. W. J. BOLDERO, Mrs. COULSON, BETTY DEACON, Mrs. FITZGERALD, O. Ivy HITCHCOCK, AGNES JOHNSON, MISS PAGE, DEBORAH PEARSON, PAT TEANEY
<i>Property Mistress</i>	-	-	-	-	-	BETTY REECE
<i>Assistant to the Pageant Master</i>	-	-	-	-	-	JILL WHITE
<i>Pageant Master</i> — CHRISTOPHER EDE						
<i>Opening Fanfare specially composed by</i>	-	-	-	-	-	BENJAMIN BRITTEN
<i>Ballet Music specially composed by</i>	-	-	-	-	-	ANTHONY HEDGES
<i>Other Music by</i>	-	-	-	-	-	ARTHUR COLE, HARRY DAVES, GUSTAV HOLST, TONY HEWITT JONES, WILFRED MOTHERSOLE, NORMAN O'NEILL, ROGER QUILTER, WILLIAM WALTON, PETER WARLOCK
<i>The Pageant Orchestra (Leader ANGELA RICHEY)</i>						
<i>The Augmented St. Edmundsbury Bach Choir.</i>						
<i>Choirs from the County Grammar School, The East Anglian School, the Silver Jubilee Modern Secondary Schools, The Cathedral Choir.</i>						

Above: The pageant production staff

Source: Bury St. Edmunds Pageant of Magna Carta (Bury St. Edmunds, 1959). Reproduced by kind permission of the St. Edmundsbury Heritage Service.

THE 1959 PAGEANT

The drama of this pageant was more elaborate than for 1907. Over 10 episodes, the 1959 event both updated the Bury St Edmunds story, and incorporated many key moments in English history. Although episode I starts predictably with the drama of St Edmund in the 9th century, by the final episode the audience were immersed in a critical moment of twentieth-century history – World War One, when Bury St Edmunds became a Cathedral Town. Here is a summary of the intervening episodes:

II

The much-misunderstood monarch, King Canute, is shown as a pious and just ruler who founds the Abbey.

III

The dastardly King John visits the Abbey in 1200 and brings chaos with his greed.

IV

The meeting of the barons takes place in this episode.

V

After Runnymede, AD 1215, people rejoice that nobody could now sell, deny or delay Right or Justice.

VI

Interlude: The Ballet of the Birth of Freedom. A group of dancers fight two figures representing Injustice and Oppression, and Freedom is celebrated.

VII

Parliament Meets at Bury in AD 1447. The Duke of Gloucester is found dead and the Duke of Suffolk is blamed and banished.

VIII

John Winthrop in Massachusetts, AD 1663. The influence of the Magna Carta spreads to America to become the basis of law in several states.

IX

The Election at Eatanswill in AD 1830. A fictional election scene from Charles Dickens's *The Pickwick Papers* is described.

Right: A market scene from the Magna Carta Pageant in 1959.

Source: Olga Ironside Wood, *Edmund of Anglia* (Bury St Edmunds, 1970). Reproduced by kind permission of the St Edmundsbury Heritage Service.



Market scene from the Pageant of Magna Carta produced in 1959

Photo by Bury Free Press

RICHARD TYDEMAN: 1959 PAGEANT SCRIPTWRITER

The pageant scriptwriter in 1959 was Canon Richard Tydeman, a prolific playwright with over thirty scripts to his name. His plays had been performed at drama festivals in Suffolk and further afield, and he had also written for television and radio. From 1954 he had been vicar of All Saints, Newmarket, and was, according to an obituary, “a Suffolk man through

and through”: he was born in Stowmarket and attended Woodbridge School. As well as the church and the theatre, Tydeman also achieved prominence in Freemasonry, being the Provincial Grand Chaplain for Suffolk in 1957. He was paid a fee of £300 for his services to the pageant (around £6,000 in 2015 prices), although he had only written two pageants before turning his

attention to Bury St Edmunds. Tydeman was also a published poet, wrote regularly for *Freemasonry Today* and compiled crosswords for the *Church Times*. He died in 2011 at the age of 94.

Right: Magna Carta Pageant 1959, opening ceremony. Seen here, with the Mayor, are Rev. Tydeman (left) the scriptwriter, and Christopher Ede (right), the professional Pageant Master.

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THE CHANGING FACE OF BURY ST EDMUNDS: 1970

In the years following the Second World War, Bury St Edmunds had experienced “a period of expansion which can only be paralleled by the twenty years before the Norman Conquest in 1066 and the compilation of Domesday Book in 1086”. By 1960 the building up of the Mildenhall estate was well under way, joining the Howard estate and the Nowton Road housing. Industrial estates were also built, as Bury St Edmunds

actively courted London firms to come and set up under a town expansion scheme. Agriculture, while still important, was joined in the local economy by new businesses of many kinds, including Vitality Bulbs and Vintents, who made specialised cameras. The population of the town had climbed sharply – after staying around 16,000 from 1881 to 1931, it reached 20,056 in 1951 and 25,661 by 1971. Inevitably,

these economic and social changes were not welcomed by everyone, and some voiced fears that the town’s distinctive local character was being lost. While there was an inkling of these changes in 1959, by 1970 they were clearly recognisable, and to the newer residents of Bury St Edmunds, the pageantry format now seemed strangely quaint and obsolete.

Right: A council house on the Mildenhall Estate, c. late 1940s.

Reproduced by kind permission of Suffolk Record Office, Bury St Edmunds, KPF/Bury 93.

Far Right: Aerial view of industrial development, east of Bury St Edmunds, north and south of railway line – 29 May 1974 (4542-4545).

Reproduced by kind permission of Suffolk Record Office, Bury St Edmunds, KPF/Bury 93.



**THE REDRESS
OF THE PAST**
HISTORICAL PAGEANTS
IN BRITAIN

YOUTH IN 1970

Efforts were made to market the Edmund Year to younger people. In a programme sent out to a number of organisations, the celebrations' co-ordinator, councillor John Knight, emphasised the martyrdom of the "young King" under the heading of "youth, liberty, participation". Knight wrote: "In 1970 let us reflect on the fast expanding knowledge, experience and comprehension of our fine generation of youth

– and the power and responsibility that go with it. Where better to call for vigilance for liberty in Britain and the world beyond than Bury St. Edmunds, whose links with Edmund and Magna Carta shine in the motto 'Shrine of the King, Cradle of the Law?'" This was an attempt to direct the energy of young people in the "right direction". In this time of the "generation gap", psychedelia, skinheads, hippies, and Hell's

Angels, youth had become a powerful symbol of the tumultuous changes of the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, one letter to the *Bury Free Press*, in response to the "despicable" Achilles' Heel protest, referred to "certain local bowler boys car[ing] little for Edmund".

Right: Bury St Edmunds in the early 1970s:
Brentgovel Street, the view west from the
top of St John's Street.

Reproduced by kind permission of Suffolk Record Office,
Bury St Edmunds, KPF/Bury 5.



OPPOSITION TO THE PAGEANT: ACHILLES' HEEL

The staging of the 1970 St Edmund of Anglia pageant play caused considerable controversy in the town, and fierce arguments were played out in the pages of the local newspapers. The organisers were accused of putting commercialism before Christian values, and commemoration of the past before planning for the town's future, a view with which even some of the local councillors agreed. A letter in the

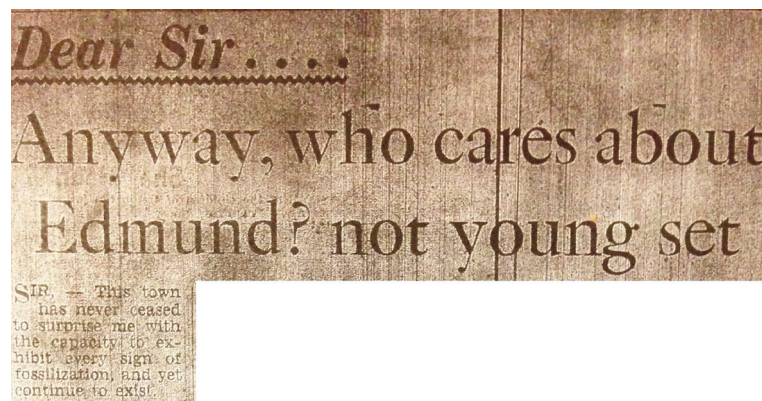
Bury Free Press by someone writing under the pseudonym "Achilles' Heel" accused the organisers of putting on the spectacle purely in the interests of the town's businesses, and called the pageant a "monumental waste of money". As part of the protest, the letter-writer decided to stage his own satirical puppet show, entitled "Was St. Edmund a Toadstool?", which was held with the help of like-minded friends in the Abbey Gardens. This kind of

opposition to the commemoration of the Bury St Edmunds's past reflected some of the changes to the town's population that had occurred over the previous twenty years, and voiced strong concerns that some sections of the population were being marginalised.

Right: The original 'Achilles' Heel'

Source: *Bury Free Press* (10 July 1970), p. 12. Reproduced by kind permission of the *Bury Free Press*.

Far Right: Extract from the 'Achilles' Heel' letter to the *Bury Free Press*, 10 July 1970



Sir – This town has never ceased to surprise me with the capacity to exhibit every sign of fossilization, and yet continue to exist. In your edition of July 3, the usual wealth of local news-gems were augmented by an orgasm of worship praising the St. Edmunds Pageant farce. In your supplement you ask the question, “Who was St. Edmund?” to which a not inconsiderable proportion of those freedom loving young people of Bury will reply “who cares?” With the exception of a group of the frightfully, frightfully country set, the town’s businessmen and some egocentric senile delinquents, a large proportion of Bury’s population do not care about St. Edmund, or the pathetically embarrassing series of events intended to colour his 1100th anniversary. The people on the estates around the old heart of their town are not involved in many of the so-called commemorative events, and see the whole affair as a waste of ratepayers’ money on what is proving to be an advertisement for the businesses of the town.

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THE 1970 EDMUND OF ANGLIA PAGEANT

Edmund of Anglia (6 July to 25 July 1970)

Episode 1 – The Palace of Offa, King of the North Folk and South Folk of East Anglia, about 850 AD

The ageing King Offa of Anglia picks his cousin's son, Edmund, as heir to the throne.

Episode 2 – The Court of King Offa's Cousin, King Alkmund, at Northemberges, in Saxony, a few years later

Episode 3 – The Palace of Offa at Thetford, sometime later

King Offa, on his death bed, shakily places the crown on Edmund's head, falls back and dies.

Episode 4 – The Meadows of Beodricsworth

[Presumably when Edmund comes to the area of Bury after being crowned to meet the people]

Episode 5 – The Palace of King Edmund

The peace-loving Edmund has a quiet time until King Lothparck of the Danes is washed ashore in an open boat. Lothparck is rescued, only to be killed in a fit of jealousy by Edmund's favourite huntsman, Berne. Berne is sentenced to be put to sea.

Episode 6 – The Byzantine Court of Hubba and Inguar, on their return from a two-year raid down the River Po to the Adriatic and Byzantium (modern-day Istanbul)

This scene included raucous entertainment, such as wrestling. Bern is rescued, turns traitor and joins the Danes.

Interval

Episode 7 – The Capture

The Viking long ship sails majestically down the River Lark and the Vikings attack Edmund and his men.

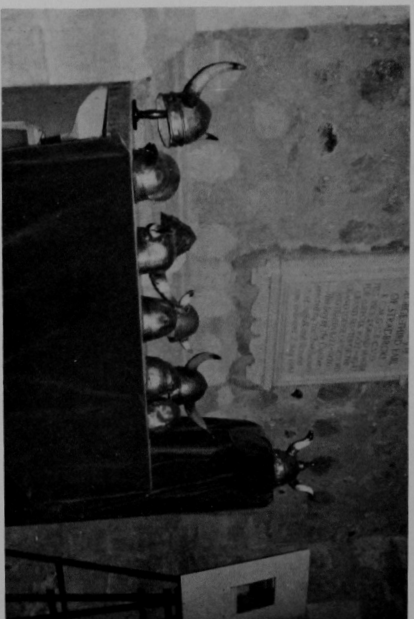
Episode 8 – The Night Before

Episode 9 – The Martyrdom

Edmund is captured and, having refused to renounce his Christian faith, is finally tied to a nearby tree and martyred by bowmen.

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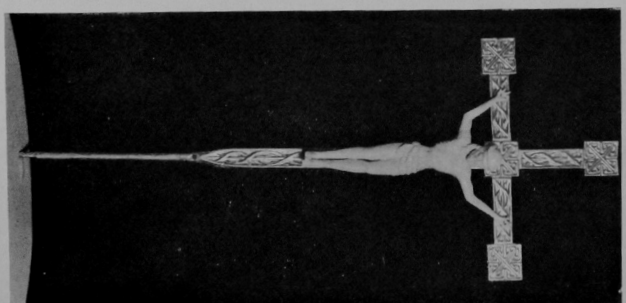
Right: Display of Helmets for 'Edmund of Anglia' designed by Kay Shield.



Bottom left: Detail of the Edmund Tapestry designed by David Orchard



Bottom Right: Bishop Humbert's Cross designed and made by David Orchard



Above: Helmets, tapestries, and crosses associated with the St Edmund Celebrations.

Source: Olga Ironside Wood, *Edmund of Anglia* (Bury St Edmunds, 1970). Reproduced by kind permission of the St Edmundsbury Heritage Service.

CARNIVAL AND CONTROVERSY IN 1970

The Edmund of Anglia pageant-play was the main summer attraction of the Year of Edmund, and included a series of events including choral music, orchestral music, and a carnival. The immensely popular carnival had 100 entries (including 52 decorated floats), which made their way through the town centre one evening, watched by as many as twelve thousand people who lined the streets of the town. The carnival included a West Indian steel band

playing a specially-composed calypso about St Edmund and monks brewing ale. However this celebratory occasion was also used to express dissatisfaction about a specific local problem, namely an ongoing dispute between the residents of Jacqueline Close and the town council. In 1967 it became clear that the remnants of old mine workings underneath the houses were beginning to suffer from subsidence. After a major collapse in 1968, when a large

amount of one house was swallowed in a hole, the area was declared unsafe by the local council, who suggested the residents should leave. Those who stayed behind organised themselves and sought compensation or repair, which the council deemed too expensive. During the carnival procession, a plain undecorated Land Rover was noticed with the protest slogan "Bury Jacqueline Close?" on the side.

Right: The gates to Jacqueline Close. After most of the estate fell into giant chalk holes the site was sealed off.

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OLGA IRONSIDE WOOD: 1970 PAGEANT PRODUCER

The producer and scriptwriter of Edmund of Anglia was Olga Ironside Wood, who had been involved with the 1959 pageant as a costume designer. At the time of the 1970 pageant, Wood was employed as the County Drama Adviser for West Suffolk. An experienced playwright and producer, Wood clearly enjoyed putting together the scenes for the play. She declared in the programme that the story “almost wrote itself.

It has everything – all the stuff of drama – war, peace, violence, suspense, betrayal, tragedy, idealism, strong human interest and glitter and spectacle.” To some of the local youth, including the writer of the “Achilles’ Heel” letter, Wood symbolised the elitism of “Torytown” Bury St Edmunds. In the satirical puppet show staged by a small group of protesters in the abbey gardens, Wood was caricatured as “Lady Olga-Ironside Woodentop”.



(B.F.P. Photo)

Olga Ironside Wood

Above: © Bury Free Press.

Source: Olga Ironside Wood, *Edmund of Anglia* (Bury St Edmunds, 1970). Reproduced by kind permission of the St Edmundsbury Heritage Service.

PAGEANT MUSIC IN 1907

A "Narrative Chorus" of fifty male voices, accompanied by a live but concealed orchestra, performed the music for the 1907 pageant. The pageant-master himself, Louis Napoleon Parker, composed some of the music for the festivities, including a "Stately Dance" and both the words and music for the St Matthew's Day piece in for Episode 7. Most of the music was

composed by Mr C. J. H. Shann, the Master of the Music, but Mr C. J. W. Ganz set the Carmen; Mr Felix W. Morley composed the dance-song in Episode I; and the Mayor, Councillor Owen A. Clark, also contributed several numbers. The full band of the 1st Suffolk Regiment delivered a programme of music on the barrack ground on Sunday, 7 July, from 3pm to 4.30pm.

The first page of the "Triumph Song."

COMPOSED BY C. J. H. SHANN.

PIANO.

VOICE.

TENOR.

BASS.

a tempo.

SOBRANO.

ALTO.

wa - ters, the Lark and the Lin - net, Come join in the cho - rus, come swell in the song.

f

molto rall. & con.

a tempo.

mu - sic and rap - ture be - long! With thy sweet lit - tle

mu - sic

ad lib.

Thy tri umph a -

ad lib.

ff

rit.

*

Above: The first page of the pageant's "Triumph Song"

Source: *Commissaire Magazine* (1907). Reproduced by kind permission of the St Edmundsbury Heritage Service.

PAGEANT MUSIC IN 1959

The music for pageants was sometimes written specially for the occasion. The composer Benjamin Britten wrote a fanfare for the prologue of the 1959 Bury St Edmunds pageant, and its ballet scene also had original music, composed by Anthony Hedges. Instead of being performed live, it was recorded in St Edmundsbury Cathedral a fortnight before the performances began, and then played from cassette tape on the day. The performers

included the Pageant Orchestra and The Augmented St Edmundsbury Bach Choir, which was made up of choirs from the County Grammar School, the East Anglian School and the Silver Jubilee Modern Secondary School, as well as the cathedral choir, and the St Edmundsbury Bach Choir itself. In total, £440 1s was spent on the music (nearly £9,000 today). It was directed by Harrison Oxley, who was something of a prodigy, being the youngest

cathedral organist in the country after gaining first-class honours in Music at Oxford, as well as founding and conducting several of his own orchestras. In the cathedral on the Sunday following the pageant, some of the pageant music was played during a special service for performers and all associated with the production.



Above: Benjamin Britten.

Source: London Records. 1968 publicity photo
Source: Wikimedia Commons http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Benjamin_Britten,_London_Records,_1968_publicity_photo_for_Wikipedia.jpg?uselang=en-gb

PAGEANT MUSIC IN 1970

The Festival of St Edmund in 1970 had several associated musical events, including a carnival watched by up to twelve thousand people, with a West Indian steel band playing a specially-composed calypso about St Edmund and monks brewing ale. July's musical programme included a Bach recital in the cathedral by renowned British cellist Jacqueline du Pré; a recital of American music by the University of California

Choir in the cathedral; a Wandsworth School Choir recital of English church music in the cathedral; a concert by the East Anglian Student Orchestra in Lavenham Church; a concert by the Moscow Chamber Orchestra in the cathedral; and a concert by the United States Air Force Band in Europe in the abbey gardens. These were followed in September by a concert by the Bleanavon Male Voice Choir at the West

Suffolk College of Further Education, and in October by concerts by the St Edmundsbury Bach Choir and Orchestra, East Anglian Student Orchestra, St John's College Choir, Cambridge, and a recital of organ music. November saw a service commemorating Edmund that brought the festivities to a conclusion.

Right: Bury St Edmunds Cathedral, 2005.

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THE 1907 BURY ST EDMUNDS PAGEANT FILM

This film was made by Ronald James Bates, a pioneer of film photography who put on cinema shows in Bury St Edmunds during the early years of the twentieth century. Shot on location in the abbey gardens, the camerawork is remarkably steady, even if the film quality is grainy. Throughout the film, key dialogue and explanatory text is presented on title cards. Edited down from three hours to just under

half an hour in length, it is likely that the film would have been shown in cinemas across the region, perhaps even further afield – possibly to the accompaniment of live music. During one such showing at Newmarket Town Hall on 7 September 1907 the projector was knocked over and burst into flames. The five hundred-strong audience panicked, and several women died in the ensuing fire.

Re-edited with additional titles in 1951, the film was presented to the Borough Council of Bury St Edmunds by councillor Mrs Ethel Bates, in memory of her husband.

Information from East Anglia Film Archive, Bury St Edmunds Pageant cat. no. 527.

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PANIC AT NEWMARKET TOWN HALL.

THREE PERSONS BURNT TO DEATH. MANY INJURED.

There was a shocking accident at Newmarket on Saturday evening during a cinematograph entertainment at the Town Hall. A blaze occurred in connection with the instrument, and the audience broke in a panic, resulting in the death of two women and a girl, and many persons were more or less injured.

The entertainment was being given by the Gaumont Company, the pictures displayed being mainly scenes from the recent pageants at Hury St. Edmund's, St. Albans, and other places. It is said the hall was so crowded that even the stage was invaded, the company numbering some 700 or 800 people. There was no unusual incident until an interval was announced at nine o'clock. Before the lights could be turned up, and while the hall was in almost total darkness, a number of people moved towards the main exit, and by some means the apparatus, which was built up on some boxes by the door, was upset, and there was a blaze. The tube connecting the cylinders of gas were displaced, and the spool of film which was on the machine burst into flame. A cry of "Fire" was raised, and immediately there was a scene of excitement and panic. The people rushed frantically towards the exits, women and children were thrown down and trampled upon, and screams of terror arose on every side. Mr. Frank

Above: A press report on the Newmarket

Town Hall Fire in September 1907.

Source: Cambridge Independent Press (13th September 1907).

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(www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk)

1959 BURY ST EDMUNDS MAGNA CARTA PAGEANT

The colour film of the 1959 Magna Carta Pageant was produced by the Bury St Edmunds Amateur Ciné Club for the Mayor and Corporation of the Borough. It was directed by S. M. Casson with the assistance of a variety of local people. For an amateur production, it is a remarkable piece of work, carefully filmed using a number of different cameras and angles. It is soundtracked with pre-recorded orchestral music, presumably the same used for the actual live performance. The film commentary

is by Canon Richard Tydeman, who was also responsible for the pageant script.

The film opens with the Bury St Edmunds coat of arms and then dedicates the production to the Mayor, the pageant master and the cast. But instead of launching straight into the pageant performance, action begins in modern-day Bury St Edmunds, with interesting shots of local people shopping in the food and cattle market in the centre of the town. We even see a shot of Moyse's Hall! The narrator explains that while agriculture is still the town's chief concern, and makes much of the preserved Georgian character of some of the streets, he also describes the growth of the population,

the mechanisation of industry, and the town's new housing estates. In this way the film seeks to situate the long history of the town in the context of a progressive postwar modernity.

In many ways this was the same task of the pageant itself. As is clear from the film, the pageant celebrated the glorious heritage of the town and its association with Magna Carta. But it also sought to project the values enshrined in Magna Carta, in particular forward into the future: "Buildings may be destroyed, and men must die, but Freedom lives; her spirit is immortal."

Right: A view of Bury St Edmunds from the Abbey Gates in the 1950s.

Reproduced by kind permission of the St Edmundsbury Heritage Service, 1999.28.6.



1970 EDMUND OF ANGLIA PAGEANT FILM

This colour film of the 1970 Edmund of Anglia Pageant Play was a shortened version of Olga Ironside Wood's production, made for television. It was directed by Peter Minns, the now well-known award-winning director (who in July 1982 achieved an audience of 10 million viewers for "Satisfaction: The Rolling Stones 20 Years On"). Edmund of Anglia was narrated by Jon Curle, the

BBC announcer and presenter, who had been with the corporation since 1959. In comparison to the film of the 1959 pageant, the dialogue and action is more serious and religious in content. Gone is the (intentional) comedy that marked the earlier production; at the close of the 30 minute film, the body of the martyred Edmund is dragged off screen in silence, as the credits roll.

Credits

Director: Peter Minns
Producers: Olga Ironside Wood, John Roe.
Production Assistant: Martin Leonard
(production assistant)
Camera: Douglas Fisher; Alan Scales; Noel Balbirnie (additional photography)
Script: Olga Ironside Wood
Editor: Richard Brunskill
Sound: Mike Rosenberg

Right: A still from the Edmund of Anglia television special: the Viking wrestling scene.

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