

The Borough of Sudbury

This file contains documentary evidence of life in a small market town in Suffolk.

The Shelley family lived and worked there for many generations. As 'freemen' of the town they traded and were located, for most periods, at 'Wigan End' at the north-east of the town. They had been craftsmen, firstly in the woollen trade for which Sudbury was famous and from the eighteenth century, as blacksmiths.

The family group was large and provided products and services to the town. Eventually, as the demands for blacksmithing declined, economic pressures lead to a migration in the late nineteenth century of younger members to London and alternative opportunities.

Sudbury is a town of antiquity and great interest. From its early origins as a Saxon burgh and its ecclesiastic establishments. It had been of considerable importance entitled South Borough (hence Sud-bury) to Nor-wich (the North Town). During the early wool economy, Sudbury had prominence, was wealthy and influential, signified by the three fine churches and other buildings that exist today.

The town has had a chequered history, not least in it becoming famous as (Dickens' Eatanswill) a 'Rotten Borough' caught up in a voting scandal. Corruption through bribery at elections caused the Borough to be disenfranchised in the nineteenth century. Members of the Shelley family were required to give evidence to the Commissioners.

Under the Local Government Act 1972, Sudbury was no longer a Borough. The Town Council became subsidiary to an overarching Babergh District Council. Freeman had been granted, and were extended the right to use the Borough Arms. The 1972 Act guaranteed the rights of Sudbury freemen, but the admission ceremony was thenceforth conducted by the District Chairman. Sudbury's Town Mayor normally presides at these ceremonies, where admissions are by descent or servitude.

Subsequent changes, since the 1972 Act, have permitted the age of admission to be lowered from 21 to 18, and the allowance of grandchildren to apply. From 1992, women have been permitted admission to the freedom of Sudbury.

A full history, including much of the everyday occurrences in Sudbury can be found in the many publications produced by Allan Berry, fellow freeman of the town, to whom I am most grateful for his kind assistance's.

* Wigan End was the name given to an area now known as East Street. The 1840 Sudbury Tithe Map clearly indicates 'Wiggins End' with 'Wiggins Piece' as a property on the south-east side of the Waldingfield Road, opposite five properties on the north-western side, adjacent to 'Newman's Piece. The name is variously spelt Wigan, Wiggen and Wiggan. It seems likely that the name originates with the family of Simon Wigayn whose name appears under an account of the Chamberlain of Sudbury in 1353 (see 'Hodson's History of the Borough of Sudbury' 1905 page 22).

The Borough

Sudbury is an ancient Town. As a chartered municipal borough it had rights and privileges that originated in the early Middle Ages. Originally the designation of a fortified town or burh, the term 'borough' came to mean a town which returned burgesses to Parliament. By virtue of their charters such towns as Sudbury obtained the right to own property and exercise their corporate identity (incorporated 1554) in the name of Mayor and Council, and by the first Municipal Corporations Act 1835, 178 ancient chartered boroughs were given a uniform system of elected councils, thus becoming 'municipal' boroughs. As such they took over all organisation of public services including any previously in private hands. From that beginning powers were perpetually added to the Municipal Corporations.

The Local Government Act of 1972 abolished, as from 1 April 1974, the 58 county councils which had previously existed in England and Wales. In all, 36 new metropolitan districts and 333 country districts were created; these replaced all the previous boroughs, urban districts and rural districts, which were abolished. Babergh (with offices at Hadleigh) became the District Authority responsible for the area including Sudbury. A town council continues to operate (with restricted capacity) from within the Sudbury Town Hall. Borough status was thereby lost to Sudbury in 1974 along with many other ancient boroughs such as Hertford, Harwich or Buckingham.

Some customs of the olden days remain (even so they are under threat) including the admissions to the freedom of the Town and Commons. During the intervening years of the 1972 Act and 1992 when women were accepted for admission into the freedom, the 'swearing-in' ceremony was held at the Court (within the council chambers) of the Babergh District Authority (Hadleigh). This was where I was admitted "a free Burgess of the Town of Sudbury and of the Commons" in 1979.

The freemen's Society brought attention to Section 248 of the Local Government Act, 1972 in that the responsibility for decision making rests with the Chairmen of District Councils as to where admissions are held. They expressed concern that any further (future) reorganisation may make admissions more remote from the town. Currently admissions are again conducted at Sudbury Town Hall, by the authority of Babergh District Council.

The 'Royal' Manor of Sudbury

Before the Anglo/Norman reign of Edward the Confessor leading eventually to the Norman invasion there had been a period of relative peace. Cnut [Canute] having gained the crown through aggression proved to be a just and even ruler.

During Cnut's reign the two most powerful earls were Godwin of Wessex and Leofric of Mercia with estates scattered throughout England. Godwin had been of minor rank, the son of Wulfnoth Cild a thegn from Compton in Sussex who had gained a position by treachery.

Godwin's rise under Cnut was rapid, he distinguished himself on an expedition to Denmark where he married Gytha, the sister of the Danish earl Ulf who was married to Cnut's sister Estrid. It is generally believed that after Cnut's death, Godwin captured Alfred the Atheling (Æthelred's surviving son and elder brother of Edward) had him blinded and executed at Ely. Godwin then encouraged the enthronement of Edward the Confessor and secured the marriage of his daughter Edith to the King.

Edward, concerned about Godwin, drew advisors, nobles and priests from Normandy to develop his own power base. Godwin opposed the Norman influence and the King drew on Leofric for support. When Godwin died in 1053, choking on a piece of bread while denying any disloyalty to the King, his son Harold succeeded as Earl of Wessex.

Leofric, Earl of Mercia, was born of an ancient and noble princely family. His reputation was that of Anglo/Saxon justice and kindness. The Mercian estate was large and widely dispersed through many shires. Leofric's son Ælfgar, at one time Earl of East Anglia came into direct confrontation with Harold resulting in a battle at Hereford before it was resolved. Ælfgar's estates in Essex and Suffolk included Sudbury. The Domesday Book records the manor of Sudbury as having been in possession of Morchar's mother Countess Elvira (who was Ælfgar's wife).

Ælfgar became Earl of Mercia on the death of his father. His sons, Edwin and Morchar became earls of Mercia and Northumbria. They did not accompany Harold at the Battle of Hastings. Harold married their younger sister in an attempt to gain a greater noble connection with the 'old aristocracy' and the support of the 'Mercian' people.

The brothers Edwin and Morchar attended William's court until the 1070s by which time they were finding the Norman dictates impossible to accept and they rebelled. Edwin was killed in battle and Morchar was captured at Ely and imprisoned until his death at an unknown date. Their lands were forfeit (the normal result from treason). Sudbury automatically passed into the possession of the Crown. Hence Sudbury became a royal manor.

Sudbury, in the hands of the royal family passed through the sovereign into the Gloucester estates. Eventually, through marriage, the manor along with most of the Gloucester estates came into the landed inheritance of the De Clares.

Notes: Research studies have found that estates forfeit to the Crown have tended to remain intact. Such properties are invariably made up of scattered manors that have been accumulated over time from marriages and inheritances.

Prior to the Norman rule, women owned properties (by marriage dowries and inheritances) in their own right.

Leofric, renowned for his Lordships of Chester, Leicester and Coventry was famously married to the legendary Lady Godiva.

His son Ælfgar married Ælfgifu and their daughter Ealdgyth married first Gruffydd Ap Llywelyn who was killed 1063 and secondly to King Harold II (Godwinson) in 1066, presumably a political move to amalgamate with the 'Mercians'.

Sudbury 'Market Town'

The raised ground now known as Mill Hill, surrounded by the curve of the river Stour and once enclosed by marshy ground provided a secure area for early settlers from the Continent. Germanic people known as *Belgea* created a small settlement around 100 years BC. The defences were enhanced as it eventually became the southern burgh [*Sudbergh*] of the Eastern Angles of the *Wuffinga* dynasty.

Almost from its beginnings Sudbury provided the services of a market town to the cluster of agricultural settlements/villages surrounding the town. As the population grew in pursuit of the woollen and subsequent cloth trades the town had close links to other towns. Trading and export would pass through Ipswich for Europe and likewise with Colchester. The greater market, that of London was within reasonable distance.

In the eighth century, East Anglia including Sudbury was a part of the Mercian Kingdom. It would appear that Sudbury may have been of religious importance having a 'Minster' probably at the site of St. Gregory's church and subsequent college. In 797/8 Bishop Ælfhun is recorded in the Saxon Chronicles to have died here.

Sudbury, forfeit shortly after the Norman Conquest, passed through the royal family to Robert of Gloucester, the illegitimate son of Henry I. The manor then passed down (with the Gloucester estates) to his son William who presented it to his daughter Amicia who married and later divorced Richard de Clare, 4th Earl of Hertford.

The importance of Sudbury at that time, with its flourishing trade, markets and fairs, is further illustrated by having its own Mint. In the years 1114-16 Wulfric the Moneyer had sufficient personal wealth to found a small priory St. Bartholomew's close by the town. This Benedictine Cell he presented to Westminster where Wulfric was eventually buried.

When Amicia died in 1223, her son Gilbert became Earl of Gloucester and Hertford. He survived only a further seven years before passing the combined de Clare/Gloucester estates to his son Richard de Clare 2nd Earl of Gloucester and 6th Earl of Hertford. It was this Richard who ratified the burgesses rights in the charter of c 1260, only a couple of years before his decease. His son Gilbert (The Red) married secondly King Edward's sister Joan of Acre upon whose death, Sudbury in effect was to revert back to the Crown [and a Royal Manor].

One could reasonably say that the town was run by its citizenry. The leading elite had gained their positions through trade or professions. There was no aristocracy. Prominent families such as the Theobalds gained their wealth initially through trade as did the Gainsboroughs, the Carters and the Andrews.

The working class nature of the town led to a popularity in separatism and in 'left-wing tendencies'. The High church and Conservatism was often in conflict with the populace who developed many branches or 'conventicles'.

In the 16th century the Dissolution of the Priory provided an opportunity for the Waldegraves of Bures and the Edens to improve their lot. Even so they tended to support the common citizens and did not impose any form of aristocratic influence upon the town or its administration. The population of the town were such that the leading aldermen, once positioned had plaques with their names placed on their seats in the Moot Hall where they anticipated an extensive (long stay) regime. Alan Shelley March '13.

Sudbury Court Leet

The origins of local governance of the district are complex. Sudbury was reckoned as three leets (according to Hodson) by Sperling.

Domesday describes Sudbury as land previously held by the mother of Earl Morcar then managed (from Conquest to Domesday) for the king. At that time it was set in Thinghoe Hundred. Fifteen burgesses in Sudbury were belonging to the manor of Hedingham (Castle). This was probably a temporary condition due to certain activities taking place at the time of census.

NB It is worth remembering that the Hundreds of Thinghoe and Babergh had been granted by Edward the Confessor, before the Conquest, to the Abbot of Bury and were known as being part of the Liberty of St Edmund.

There was a "right of independent jurisdiction (soke¹) in this town". When c1259 Richard de Clare eventually acquired from Simon de Lutton, Abbot of Bury St Edmund, the privilege known as 'Return of Writs' within the bounds of Sudbury².

Richard de Clare had succeeded to the lordship of Sudbury in 1230 and some time (probably 1260) before he died in 1262, he produced a charter of privileges to the townspeople. The Charter agrees that in return for an annual payment (forty shillings) the burgesses may pasture Portmanscroft and Kingsmarsh. This was later confirmed by his grand-daughter Elizabeth de Burgh in 1330 when she had become the lord of the Manor.

Of great importance is a license written at Clare Castle 17 June 1397 (20 Rich II) by Roger Mortimer (lord of Clare and of Sudbury) permitting the burgesses of Sudbury, their heirs and successors, Mayor and Bailiffs, to elect and appoint every year, two sergeants to carry maces before them, within the franchise of the Town.

Privileges (from time out of mind) included freedom of tolls for the burgesses and their goods - throughout the whole of England (probably from Royal Borough status). This was confirmed by Letters Patent 19 Henry VI (22 Nov. 1440 and again in 1455). The license confirmed freedom from "tolls, pontage, passage, piccage, pannage and murage throughout the whole realm of England".

In its early times the town had been controlled by the manorial lord. He had appointed bailiffs to receive fines, fees and tolls - including the market and fairs. Burgesses held small tenements in return for agricultural labour. The lord provided protection and safety from outside interference. His permission allowed the people to drive swine into neighbouring woods and to pasture cattle, in common, on the surrounding waste. Constitutional progress, in time, allowed various immunities over the manorial lands.

¹ Power to exercise criminal jurisdiction within the Borough. Sudbury men were exempt from attendance at Sheriff's turn or Hundred Court

² This privilege was eventually confirmed, by charter of Queen Mary, and transferred to the Mayor, Aldermen and Burgesses of Sudbury. Over the years various unsuccessful claims were made through the offices of the County High Sheriff.

In 1425, an assessment of Sudbury found Edmund Mortimer 5th Earl of March had died possessed of Sudbury and the Manor of Wood Hall, held of the King *in capiti* - Capital messuage + 800 acres of arable

21 acres of meadow

32 acres of pasture

31 acres of underwood

Two water-mills, one windmill and a fulling-mill

Fee-farms of Portman's Croft pasture

Rent from 62 ancient booths

Fee-farm of tolls of market and fairs

Rent of two permanent stalls in market place

Rent of fishing, up to Sudbury Bridge

12 weavers Shops

Picard's tenement

There were three annual fairs on market Hill on St Gregory's Day (12 March) St Bartholomew's day (24 August) and the third was originally the 5th Sunday from Lent moved to 29 June as Feast of St Peter and St Paul. and later to 10 July, on the Croft.

A weekly market has existed from Saxon times. Originally the market was held on Saturday until in 1829 it was moved to Thursdays.

In the 13th century the franchise held by the lord of the Town included a 'view of frankpledge' with police jurisdiction, together with infangthief (power to hang criminals) for crimes within the Borough, the assize of bread and ale, the return of writs etc. Pillory and tumbrell (stocks) were employed. Proper instruments of determent were necessary for justice or franchise would be lost.

View of frankpledge required a twice yearly court, which towards the end of the 13th century became known as the Court Leet for ameracements or fines. Freeman, under the bailiffs, nominated by the lord - eventually came to elect the Mayor presenting all offences against the law. The Leet jury formed the nucleus of the future Corporation. Nuisances, from blocking of highways, stopping of water courses or the breaking of bridges or fences were dealt with. As also were all matters of trade, poor quality, false weights or measures investigated.

There was also a civil court held regularly, known as the *Curia Burgi* or Portmote. This was also under the mayor or bailiffs and later became called the Court of Orders and Decrees.

NOTES:

1. The Soke was a liberty, franchise or jurisdiction - somewhat resembling a leet.
2. A Court Leet has not been held at Sudbury since 1831.
3. The honour of Clare was held of the Crown as part of the Duchy of Lancaster.
4. Sudbury was part of that honour (later known as Gloucester).
5. The Town derived its initial privileges by various grants of the Earls of Clare.
6. Sudbury was therefore, a Corporation by prescription

In the parish of All Saints, 'Ballingdon below the Bridge' appears to have had (its own) both Court Leet and a Court Baron. This district may have been part of the manor of Brundon³.

Ballingdon (Hamlet)

Baldinigeotum, Belidune*, Balydon, Baliton or Ballingdon

*King Offa's Charter of 796. Ballingdon is not mentioned in Domesday. It is a hamlet of the parish of All Saints⁴, Sudbury (also unmentioned in Domesday).

Initially of two manors - 'Ballingdon above the Bridge', with only a court baron, and 'Ballingdon below the Bridge'. The King being lord of the Leet, which included the parishes of Brundon and Middleton. The Court Leet was a court of record, held annually before the steward (or bailiff) of the leet - to review the freemen within the liberty. A jury would try all trivial misdemeanours. The Court Baron was held to recover all trivial debts.

"Ballingdon-cum-Brundon" was annexed to Sudbury by the Reform Acts 1832 and 1835. The manors of Brundon and Ballindon were also associated with Middleton, Ketchins in Bulmer, Borley and part of Henney. Close associations of All Saints parish existed with the Friars of Sudbury Priory.

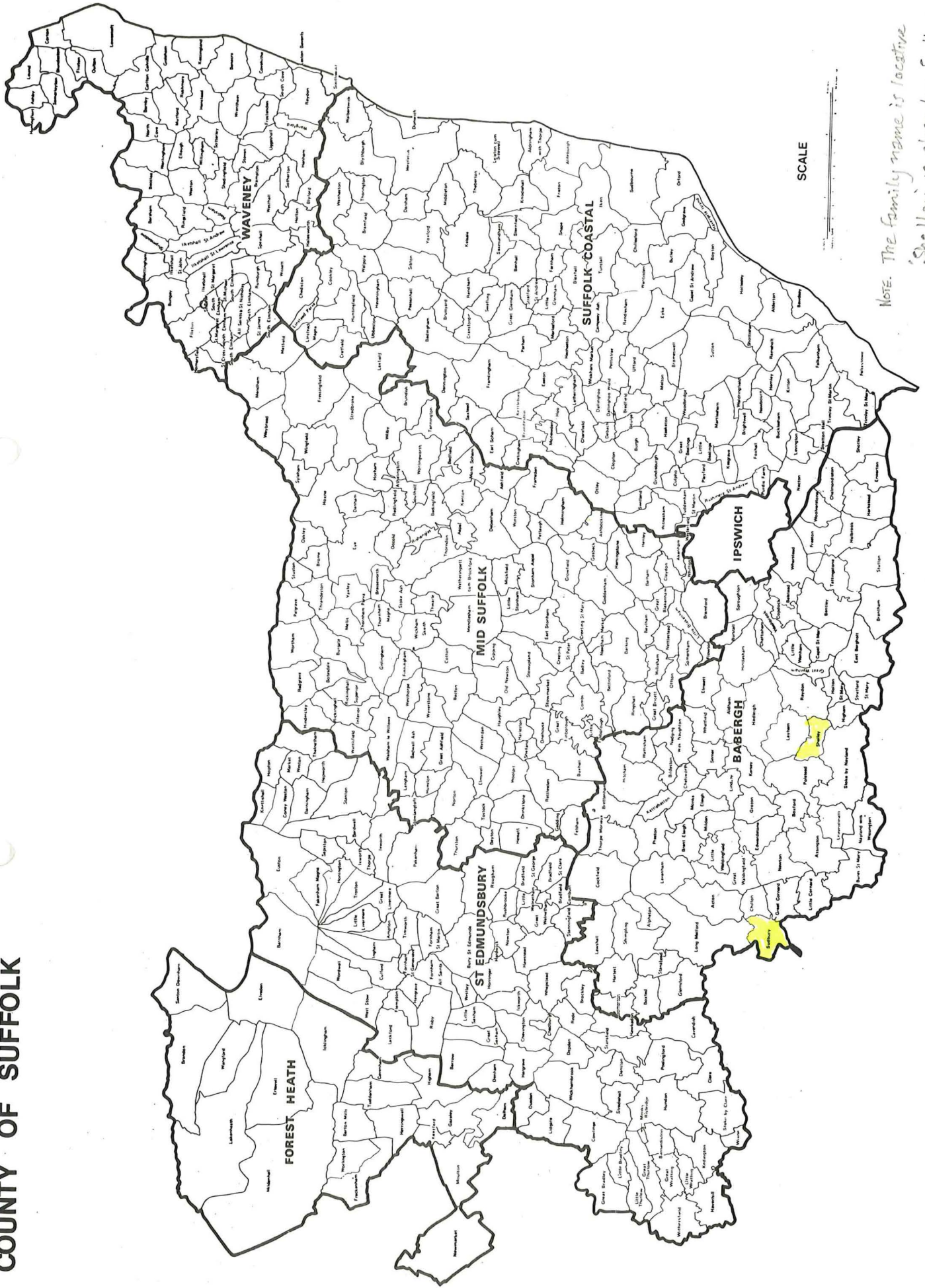
In September 1896, the Municipal Borough was extended to include part of Ballingdon and it was transferred from Essex into West Suffolk.

Alan Shelley, August 2006

³ Brundon was settled long before the Norman Conquest and has much diminished latterly.

⁴ The Church Wardens for All Saints were selected, one from Sudbury and one from Ballingdon

COUNTY OF SUFFOLK



SCALE

*Note. The family name is locative
'Shelley' is close by Sudbury.*

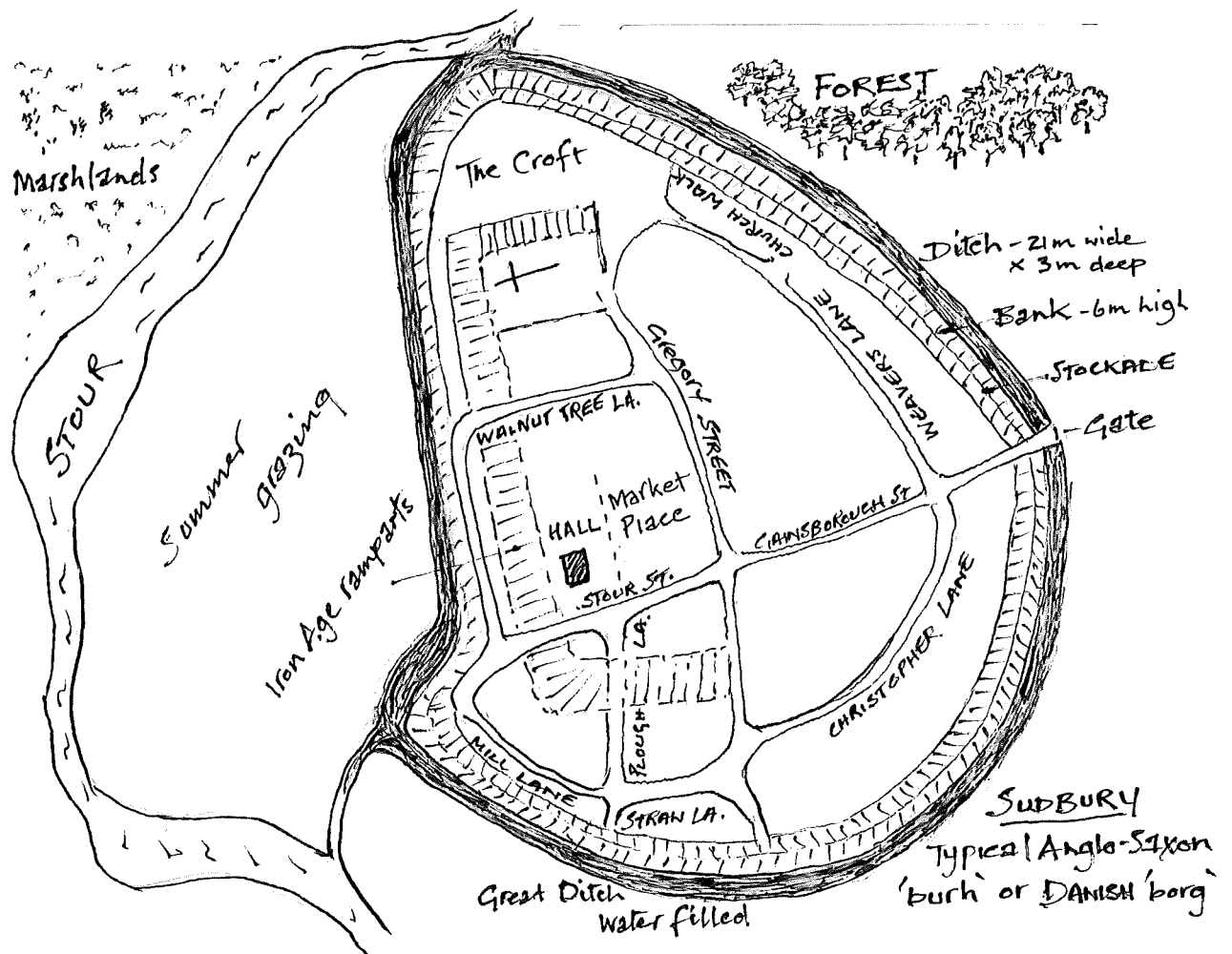
Early Development of Sudbury

There is evidence that Bronze Age farmers settled on the hill above a loop in the river. These people cleared the immediate area of the thick forest to grow crops and graze cattle on the lower land. The marshy riverside was swamped for much of the time providing natural defences against any sudden intrusion by enemy tribes.

Clearly the geographic elements of the natural landscape provided a good defensive position for settlement. Although there is no evidence of Roman occupation, Iron Age settlers have left fragments of their pottery and domestic ware such as bone hair combs etc. They enhanced the natural defences by digging ditches and creating steep earthen banks.

When Angles settled most of East Anglia in the latter part of the fifth century they at some stage established their southern boundary as the Southburgh (Sudbury). It is not clear as to the period that Sudbury gained its 'burh' status. The population during the sixth century onwards would have been a mix of Anglo-Saxons who eventually came under the jurisdiction of the Danelaw. In the ninth century, King Edward battled to regain the territories that were being governed by Danelaw. Anglo-Saxon settlements became fortified as 'burhs' and the settlements under Danish rule were similarly fortified as 'borgs'.

The people of Sudbury created a 'great ditch' filled with water diverted from the river and accompanied this with large earthen ramparts and stockade that encircled the small town. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles record that "in 798 Ælfhun bishop of Dunwich, passed away at Sudbury". Sudbury was presumably an Episcopal manor with St. Gregory's as the district minster. Dunwich was the seat of the East Anglia bishops since the time of Felix. From early times Sudbury gained importance as a trading centre and a market was well established by 1009.



The English

English and Danish are of Common Stock

'Angelnishmen' are now known as 'Englishmen', they came to England in boats as the Romans abandoned Britain. These people were 'Norsemen' that originated from 'Angeln' an ancient region of Denmark known as Schleswig.

As migrants, rather than as an invasion force, they came in family groups entering Britain via various inlets in the coastal shores. They settled in Northumbria and well known into that area we call East Anglia. In the west and middle parts of England they established the early Mercian Kingdom.

It is interesting to realise that Danes, by a concentrated mingling with the indigenous inhabitants, formed the basis of our English nation. With the subsequent advance of several Viking invasions and their eventual settlement and overrule much could be recognised in their folklore and cultural forms of custom and government. Genetically, these are the same peoples. Similarly these 'Norsemen' Danes settled and created Kiev and Russia as trading links with the Byzantine Empire, Dublin in Ireland, Normandy and the Channel Islands.

For many years there were Danish territories in England, amounting eventually to as many as fifteen 'Shires' (sheared-off districts) and these were all governed by 'the Danelaw'. England in due course became a Danish Kingdom under Sweyn Forkbeard. His son Cnut (Canute) subsequently formed a powerful Danish Empire under which England held an important position for some time within the Scandinavian world.

Famously, in England were the 'Five Boroughs' in the Midlands that were almost entirely developed by the Danes. These comprised the towns we know as Derby, Leicester, Lincoln, Nottingham and Stamford. They were fortified *burhs* (in Danish *borgs*) they operated in harmony under the governance of their Danish capital *Jorvic* now York. The fortified Danish burhs in the South were Northampton, Bedford, Huntingdon and Cambridge. From 877-958 they were ruled as Danish Jarldoms controlling their surrounding territories. In 1013 England was a Danish kingdom until 1042 when Edward the Confessor, half English and half Norman (Danish) was enthroned.

Schleswig (Sleswick in English) became a principality in Southern Jutland covering an area of about 60 km north and 70 km south dividing Denmark with northern Frisia. Traditionally it connected the trade links between the North Sea and the Baltic Sea, connecting Russia with the routes along the Rhine and the Atlantic coast. *Haithabu* the biggest Scandinavian trading centre was located in this region. The city lies at the western end of Schlei Fjord that separates the two peninsulas of Angeln and Schwansen.

Schlei is a narrow inlet of the Baltic Sea in the territory of Schleswig, stretching approximately 20 miles from the Baltic near Kappein and Arnis to the city of Schleswig. There are many small bays and swamps that separate the Angeln peninsula to the north from the Schwansen (swan lake) peninsula to the south. The important Viking settlement of Hedeby was located at the head of the firth (fjord).

NOTES

Schleswig = trading town of Schlei. Suffix wig = wic or wich in England as in Norwich or Harwich.

Danish Influence

- 880s The Danes are established in England. They set-up the 'Five Boroughs' in the Mercian Midlands plus setting up York as their capital. (All under the Danelaw).
- 884 East Anglia has become Danish and Guthrum is baptised and renamed Athelstan.
- 885 The Danish 'Athelstan' is called 'Half King'.
- 918 Edward the Elder becomes overlord of Wessex, Mercia and Wales
- 920 Danes of East Anglia submit to King Edward
The Danes remained in charge at York. The shires eventually came into being with the settlement of the Danish armies. English and Danish territories were separated. 'English and Danish Mercia' remained until the English King Athelstan united England. The established Danish territories were all under Danelaw by 959.
- 932 Ealdorman Athelstan remains as 'Half King'
- 946 (to 951) Ælfgar (of Mercia) was entitled Ealdorman of Essex
Ælfgar's daughter was married to Byrhtnoth English Earl of Essex (951/991)
- 960 Æthelwald, son of Dane Æthelstan became Ealdorman of East Anglia
- 962 Æthelwald is killed by King Edgar. Æthelwine his brother is then made Ealdorman of East Anglia until 992.
- 991 The famous battle of Maldon when Earl Byrhtnoth, of Essex was killed and buried at Ely. His daughter Lady Æthelflaid held the lordship of Waldingfield by Sudbury.
- 992 Ealdorman Æthelwine died and he appears to have been succeeded by Ulfeytel a Danish military leader.
- 1010 Thurkell (the tall) dominates East Anglia.
- 1015 Ealdorman Eadric Streona has been created Earl of Mercia and at a conference at Oxford he has two of the leaders of the Five Boroughs killed (one of whom is Lord Morcar the ancestor of Earl Morcar lord of Sudbury).
- 1016 Cnut bestows governance as Earl of East Anglia over East Anglia to Thurkell.
- 1017 Cnut is generally accepted as over King of England.
- 1022 Ælfric of Clare owns Clare and Hundon (the two biggest manors).
- 1042 Edward the Confessor became King as surviving son of King Æthelred II and his second wife Emma of Normandy (he was half brother of Hardicanute).
- 1045 The earldom of East Anglia is given to Harold Godwinson (when Edith his sister married King Edward).
- 1051 Earl Godwin is exiled for treason and his family demoted. Ælfgar Leofricson of Mercia is handed the Earldom of East Anglia – until 1057.
- 1057 Gyrrh, 4th son of Godwin is made Earl of East Anglia replacing Ælfgar who had become Earl of Mercia on the death of Leofric.
- 1065 538 burgesses of Ipswich hold 40 acres. Wisgar of Clare holds the manor of St.Peter's and Phin the Dane has 15 acres. Phin was said also to hold part of the old Saxon honour of Clare (VHS). Phin was an adviser to Harald Hadrada. (Such manors were formerly baronies that could be made up of several bailiwicks
- 1066 Battle of Hastings and new occupation by the Norman Conquest.
- 1069 Roger Bigod holds local jurisdiction from Ipswich Castle.
- 1086 Roger Bigod is Sheriff of Ipswich Castle. There are 110 burgesses that render custom and Richard de Clare now holds St Peter's (Ipswich) and Phin the Dane's burgesses. Siege of Ipswich Castle by King Stephen. The Castle was completely destroyed in 1176.
- 1200 King John's charter to the burgesses of Ipswich. NB. Returning trade from Ipswich ships such as those of Tooley the Ipswich merchant would be sold at St. Gregory's Fair at Sudbury (particularly Fish Stocks).

Alan Shelley.

Lords of Sudbury and Gloucester

Anglo-Saxon Kings of East Anglia

Raedwald	593--617
Eorpwald	617--628
Sigebert	631--634
Egrice	634--635
Anna	635--654
Æthelhere	654--655
Æthelwald	655--664
Eadwulf	664--713
Ælfwald	713--749
Beorna	749--?
Æthelbert	?--793

After whom East Anglia was united with Mercia until--823

Eadwald	823--829?
Æthelstan	829--839?
Æthelweard	839--852?
Beorhtric	852--856?
Edmund	856--870
Edmund was murdered by the Danes in 870 and	
Afterwards there were three Danish kings of East Anglia:	
Guthrum	878--890
Eohric	890--902
Guthrum	902--916?

Anglo-Saxon Kings of Wessex

Ceawlin	560--592
Ceolric	592--597
Ceolwulf	597--611
Cynegils	611--643
Ceonwalch	643--645
(confusedperiod)	--648
Coenwalch	648--672
Seaxburgh Qu'n	672--674
Æscwine	674--676?
Centwine	676--685?
Ceadwalla	685--688
Ine	688--726
Æthelheard	726--740
Cuthred	740--756
Sigebert	756--757
Cynewulf	757--786
Beorhtric	786--802
Ecgbert	802--839
Æthelwulf	839--858
Æthelbald	858--860
Æthelbert	860--866
Æthelred	866--871
Alfred	871--900
Edward the	
Elder	900--924
Æthelstan	924--939
Edmund	939--946

Sudbury's origins may predate the Saxon period, but it was from then that its importance was realised. During the eighth century the old kingdom of East Anglia formed part of Mercia and it is during that time Sudbury is first mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. A minister-church had been established in early times and Ælfhun, Bishop of Suffolk, died at Sudbury 798, during a visit. The minister had early monastic connections and was probably well endowed. In the reign of Æthelred II (979-1016) Sudbury was possessed of a royal mint.

In 970 Æthelric gave a moiety of his estate at North-Hoo to St Gregory's Sudbury. Ælfled, widow of Brithnoth the heroic ealdorman at the battle of Malden and daughter of Ælfgar, first Ealdorman of the East Saxons, in 993 devised her lands at Waldingfield to St Gregory's in Sudbury. It is clear, from the Domesday Book that Sudbury, during the times of Edward the Confessor, had formed a part of the estate of Ælfgifu [said to be partly of Norman descent and related to William Malet¹]. She held the town (in her own right and as widow of Earl Ælfgar, of Mercia).

¹ Through the male line, it has been suggested she descended from Wulfrun. Described as *Ælveva Comitissa*, daughter of Ealdgyth and Morcar, she was the mother of Ealdgyth married to Harold, and of Earls Edwin and Morcar who rebelled against William I (after the initial Conquest) around 1068 and again in 1071.

Ælfgar earl of Mercia inherited one of the most powerful earldoms of the late English period. He was from the ancient noble Hwiccean (Gloucestershire) family of Leofwine. He married Ælfgifu, god daughter of Wulfric Spot thus uniting the two noble Mercian families of Wulfrun and Leofwine. His father Leofric² had been earl of Mercia since 1017 and as such had gained considerable power. Ælfgar was of sufficient wealth and importance in 1050 to send an ornate gospel to Rheims in memory of his son Burchard who had died on a pilgrimage in Rome.

In 1053 Ælfgar was made earl of East Anglia. This was short lived due to the politics of the day and rivalry with the powerful Godwinson family and when Harold kindled an accusation of treason in 1055, Ælfgar was exiled in Ireland. From there he went to Wales in alliance with Gruffydd ap Llywelyn, the Welsh prince and support from a Scandinavian force to attack English forces at Herefordshire. Ælfgar was reinstated but following a subsequent attack by Harold, Gruffydd was defeated and killed in 1063.

In 1057 when Leofric died, Ælfgar became earl of Mercia. Whilst the family of Ælfgar was rich and powerful it was never able to equal the political powers of its rivals, the family of Godwine, earl of Wessex. The lands of Ælfgar were spread throughout Mercia, Lincolnshire and East Anglia. Ælfgar died in 1062 when his son Edwin then became earl of Mercia.

The entry for Sudbury in the Domesday Book refers to the Town having been the property of Morcar's³ mother. Morcar, the younger brother of Edwin became earl of Northumbria from 1065 until William the Conqueror replaced him with Robert Comine.

In 1064 Tostig Godwinson had been made earl of Northumbria. He was very unpopular with the Northumbrian thegns. In October 1065, more than 200 thegns met in York and instated Morcar as their leader. Edward the Confessor turned to Harold to sort it out. Although Tostig was Harold's brother he could see that intervention would cause civil war. Harold (politically) married Ealdgyth, the sister of Morcar in 1066, becoming his brother-in-law⁴. Tostig was banished and Edward gave Morcar the earldom of Northumbria.

Following the death of Edward the Confessor, Morcar hesitatingly⁵ supported Harold's proclamation as king. In early September 1066, Tostig and 300 ships plundered the coast around Scarborough before entering the Humber where on 20 September they defeated Morcar's army at Gate Fulford. Four days later they took York. Harold defeated Tostig and the forces of King Harald Hardrada of Norway at Stamford Bridge. Morcar's reluctance to assist Harold at Hastings was possibly due to lack of resources having been so heavily beaten at Gate Fulford.

Morcar submitted to William the Conqueror and as a result was allowed to keep his estates. In 1067, Morcar and his brother Edwin, earl of Mercia, went with William to Normandy. The two brothers remained in his court until 1068. In 1068 the brothers attempted to raise the North but failed ignominiously. They were pardoned but lost their earldoms. Edwin perished in attempting to raise a Welsh rebellion. In 1070 Hereward [the Wake] seized the isle of Ely. Morcar joined the insurgents but the following surrendered when attacked by William's army. Morcar was taken to Normandy where he was imprisoned until William's death in September 1087. Morcar returned to England but was immediately imprisoned by William Rufus who saw him as a potential threat.

² Leofric, also known as the earl of Chester, and earl of Leicester was married to the famous Lady Godiva who died c 1080.

³ Morcar was the last male member of the noble Hwiccean/ Mercian line.

⁴ Linking Harold and the Godwinsons to the old royal Mercian family of Leofwine.

⁵ Edgar the ætheling had rightful entitlement. The southern counties acquiesced to Harold's kingship, while Mercia and Northumbria (rivals of the Godwinsons) were unsatisfied.

Anglo Saxon Earl Morcar and Sudbury

Morcar (or Morchar or Morkere) earl of Northumbria (died c 1087) son of Ælfgar, earl of Mercia and brother of Edwin, earl of Mercia.

It has been suggested that Morcar, before the Conquest, may (as did Harold) have sworn fealty to Duke William. This could have been done by Morcar in preference to any reigning powers of the rival Godwinsons.

Morcar and Edwin appear to have initially retained their titles, lands and honours until insurrection in the North, against Norman interference, in 1068 caused them to retaliate. The brothers were pardoned and remained in William's court but lost their powers leading to further rebellion. eventually Morcar's lands were forfeit and he joined the outlaws accompanying Hereward the Wake (who may well have been a distant cousin).

Sudbury at Domesday:

At around 1086, the survey returned Sudbury as part of the Thingoe Hundred the 'Liberty of St Edmund' granted by Edward the Confessor to the Abbot of Bury. In the reign of King Edward, Sudbury had formed part of the estate of the noble lady Ælfgifu or Alvera, or (*Ælveva Comitissa*) widow of Earl Ælfgar and mother of Earl Morcar, whose lands had been forfeited to King William. Sudbury was then being managed by William the chamberlain and Otto the goldsmith on behalf of the King.

In the Confessor's time the demesne lands consisted of three carucates of land, with one villein, sixty three burgesses, living at the Hall, six serfs, three ploughteams in demesne, and fifty five burgesses in demesne with two carucates of land. These had four ploughteams. There was also the church of St Gregory, with fifty acres of free land and twenty five acres of meadow. Likewise a mill, two horses in demesne at the Hall, seventeen beasts, twenty three hogs, one hundred sheep, and eight acres of meadow in the borough, and one market and money coiners. The value of the whole was eighteen pounds, which by the time of the Survey had risen to twenty eight, but the only changes in the particulars from Saxon times was an extra villein and four serfs less. The length was four quarantenes and the breadth three, and it paid in a gelt five shillings. There was also a soc in the town.

Cornard

In King Edward's time Ælfgifu, mother of Morcar, held three carucates as a manor. There were eight villeins, nine bordars, eight slaves, three ploughteams in demesne and eight belonging to the men, a mill, fourteen acres of meadow, wood for ten hogs, and a church living without land. There were also four horses at the Hall, eighteen beasts, eighty hogs and three hundred and sixty three sheep. By the time of the Norman Survey there were ten villeins, twenty five bordars and nine slaves, but only one ploughteam in demesne. The ploughteams, however, of the men had risen to ten.

The custody of this manor had again been committed by King William to William the Chamberlain and Otto the Goldsmith for the Crown. Within this estate the Abbot of Bury held two freemen with fifty acres and one acre of meadow (the value was six ores). These freemen could give or sell their lands but the soc and all customs belonged to the Abbot. Later, Richard, son of Earl Gislebert [de Clare] also held seven freemen who in the Confessor's time had held under Wisgar or Witgar by commendation and soc and sac two carucates of land and one bordar; also five acres of meadow. There had been three ploughteams, but in Norman days

there were only two. The value of Richard's holding was twenty six shillings and eight pence. Another holding was that of Ralph de Limesi, namely a freeman (under Wisgar by commendation only and soc) having one carucate of land. There were five bordars, one ploughteam in demesne and six acres of meadow, wood for four hogs, and five beasts. There were then twenty hogs where formerly there had been only ten, and sixty sheep where there had been half that number, and the value of the holding was twenty shillings. The great Survey after this entry says, " It is half a league long and half a league broad and paid three and a half in gelt".

Groton

This comprised one manor but one hundred acres were held as belonging to the Manor of Cornard. Held in Saxon times by the Abbot of Bury, it was not disturbed by the Conquest. The holding consisted of one carucate and a half as a manor, eight villeins, five bordars, one ploughteam in demesne, two belonging to the men, one acre of meadow, wood for ten hogs, a water mill, one rouncey, six beasts, sixteen hogs and thirty sheep. There were also two freemen with half an acre of land which they could give away or sell, six bordars, one ploughteam and one acre of meadow. The manor was seven quarantenes long and four broad.

The holding in Groton which belonged to Cornard Manor was four socmen with one hundred acres and three bordars. Among these was a ploughteam. The whole had in Saxon times been valued at ten pounds, but later in Norman days, at twenty shillings and eight pence by tale. It was six quarantenes and three perches long and four and a half quarantenes and four perches broad and paid ten and a half pence in gelt. The soc was in the township and the holding was that of Earl Morcar's mother Ælfgifu which William the Chamberlain and Otho the Goldsmith kept in hand for the King.

Waldingfield

In Saxon times there three manors, one held by Ulwin, another by Ulric, King Edward's thegn, and a third by Alvera (Ælfgifu). The first consisted of two carucates of land with soc and sac, four villeins, ten bordars, four slaves, two ploughteams in demesne and two belonging to the men. There were four acres of meadow, wood for four hogs, one horse at the Hall, three beasts, sixteen hogs and one hundred sheep, and was valued at five pounds. The length was twelve quarantenes and the breadth three, and it paid in gelt six pence.

Another smaller manor consisted of one carucate of land with one villein, three bordars, one ploughteam, four acres of meadow, two beasts, twelve hogs and twenty sheep, and the value was assessed at forty shillings. Other land in Waldingfield was held in several small holdings including a holding of the Abbot of St Edmunds who had eleven freemen with half a carucate of land, three bordars, and two acres of meadow. The men could give or sell their land, but the soc, commendation and service were the Abbot's.

Brandeston Hall Manor appears as *Branston Hall* in the Survey and had belonged to Morcar's mother Ælfgifu, comprising three carucates of land. There were five villeins, six bordars, five slaves, two ploughteams in demesne and two belonging to the men, four acres of meadow, wood for ten hogs, two horses at the Hall, five beasts, twenty hogs and one hundred sheep. In the manor also were three freemen under Ælfgifu, by commendation and soc and sac (but they could sell without licence) who had twenty four acres of land of the value of five pounds. This manor was a league long and three quarantenes broad, and paid in gelt six pence. At Domesday it was held by Ralph de Curbepine of the Bishop of Bayeux as tenant in chief of the King.

NOTES

These details of the Saxon manors have been extracted from W A Copinger 'The Manors of Suffolk' (Fisher Unwin, London 1905).

The proximity and interrelationships of these particular Suffolk manors suggest that they had formed one large contiguous estate, in the prior ownership of Morcar's family

Ælfgifu, mother of Earl Morcar, died before the Domesday Survey was carried out and Morcar was somewhere imprisoned before his death around 1088.

When Ældorman Brithnoth was slain in battle at Maldon, the English carried his body to Ely to be buried in the abbey of which he had been a great benefactor. His widow Ælfled, daughter of Ælfgar the first Ældorman of the East Saxons, in 993, presented to the abbey an elaborate tapestry, on which she had wrought the glorious deeds of the hero of Maldon, and devised her lands at Waldingfield to St Gregory's in Sudbury 'as her royal sister Æthelflæd "erst foreordained it" (Hodson's History of the Borough of Sudbury).

Æthelflæd, daughter of King Alfred, the Great, was married to Æthelred of Mercia (from Gloucestershire). After his death she was recognised as 'Lady of the Mercians' and ruler of Mercia. She worked (in building fortresses) with her brother, Edward King of Wessex, in the reconquest of Dane-law. Æthelred of Mercia died in 911, a year after the battle of Tettenhall. Æthelflæd then ruled Mercia for eight years planning, and leading in person, many military expeditions herself.

GLOSSARY

Villein (*gebur*) = free villager with land, but tied to some duties for the lord of the manor.

Serf (*servi* or *bondman*) = a person bound in servitude.

Bordar (*cotsette*) = a smallholder farming assarted land (ex wasteland) on the edge of a settlement.

Copyholder = villein (unfree) tenure of land subject to manorial custom and obligation to undertake certain services.

Freeman = *liberi homine*, a tenant who held land at a fixed rent and free of feudal service.

Commendati = tenants under the protection (voluntarily) of a lord, sometimes of several.

Sac and soc = manorial jurisdiction including a right to hold a court and to receive revenues and services.

Socage = a form of feudal tenure in which land was held not by service but by a money rent.

Soke = land in the Danelaw which was held by free peasants who owed suit of court and minor customary dues to the lord of the manor (often over large area of many villages).

Carucate = as much land as a team of oxen could plough in a season (say a hide of about 120 acres). NB. a ploughteam of eight oxen.

Demesne = domain lands directly connected to the Hall.

Quarantene = fortylong or furlong, from the French *Quarente*, forty perches. (20 feet).

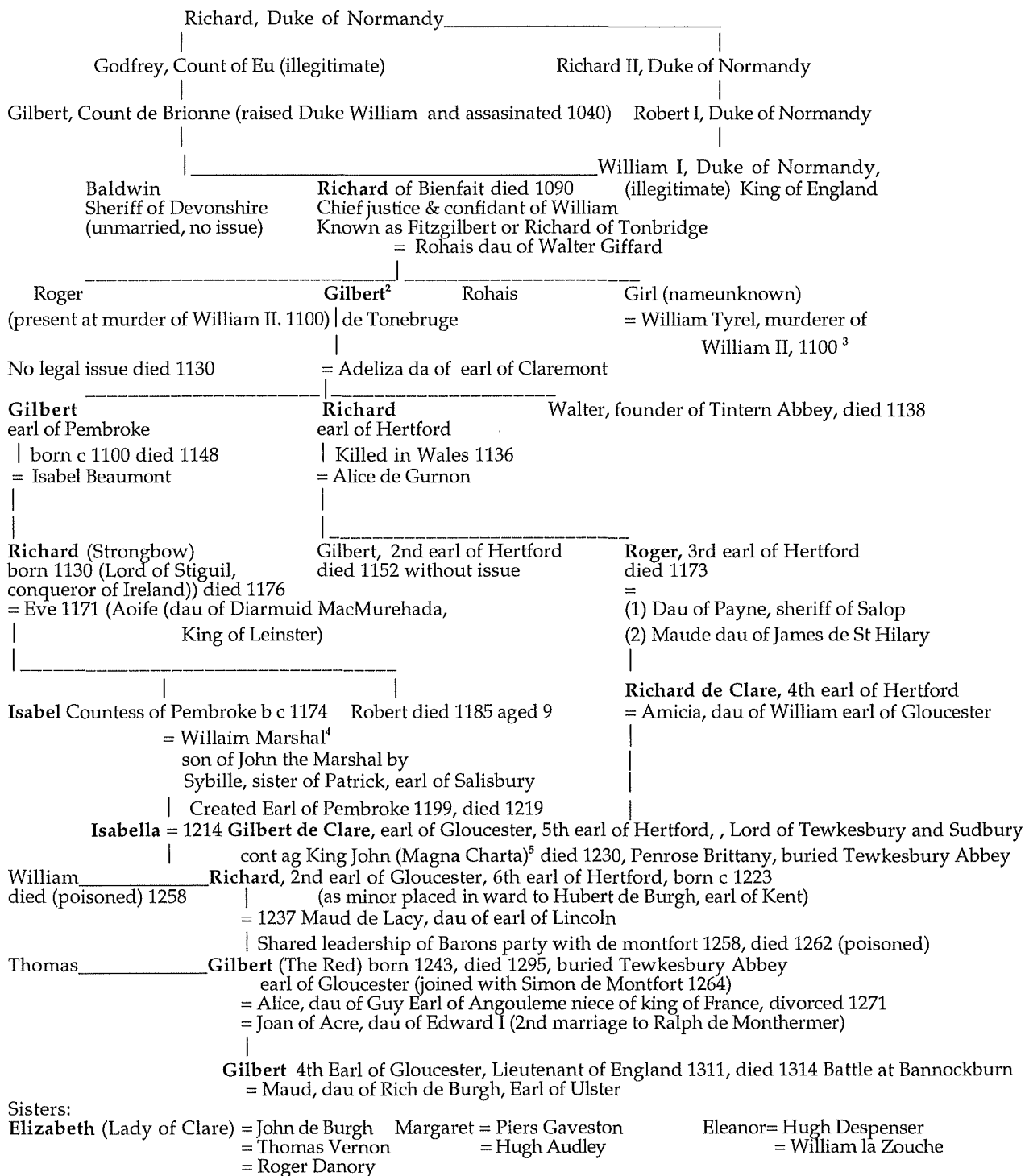
Gelt (or geld) = tax paid by landholders to the crown.

The de Clare Family

Earls of Gloucester and Lords of Sudbury & Tewkesbury

Arriving with William the Conqueror, this Norman family took their name from Clare in Suffolk, where their first castle and the seat of their barony, was situated. By the thirteenth century, the family held vast estates in Wales, Ireland, and twenty two English counties¹.

Genealogy



¹ Shortly after the Conquest, a large estate of lands including both Tewkesbury, that had belonged to Brihtric, and the estates of Earl Morcar's family including Sudbury, were put under the control of Robert Fitzhamo. Henry I gave most of these lands to his illegitimate son Robert, earl of Gloucester. From Robert they passed to his son Earl William and thence endowed to William's daughter Amice, countess of Gloucester who married Richard, earl of Clare.

² Gilbert, earl of Tonbridge and Clare, Lord of Ceredigion, Marcher Lordship of Cardigan.

³ William II (Rufus) was killed by an arrow while hunting with his de Clare cousins and William Tyrel fired the arrow, probably designed to kill.

⁴ William Marshal was 43 when he married Isabel de Clare. Present at Magna Charta and responsible for reissue.

⁵ Gilbert and his father were associated in the struggle against King John and were signatures to the Magna Charta, Both were excommunicated by Pope Innocent III in 1216.

Richard de Clare Earl of Gloucester and Hertford

Born c 1223 Died 1262

Patron of the Freemen of Sudbury, his charter of around 1260 confirmed (and established) heritage rights over common pasture lands in return for an annual fee. It is likely that the granted rights of pasturage dated back from much earlier times and certainly those of his grandfather Richard de Clare who married Amicia, daughter of William, earl of Gloucester.

The de Clare family, following the Norman Conquest, were possibly the most powerful below the Crown. When his father, Earl Gilbert died 25th October 1230 at Penrose in Brittany a great and elaborate state funeral procession carried his body for burial at Tewkesbury Abbey.

Richard succeeded as seventh earl of Gloucester and sixth earl of Hertford. He was only eight years old and in accordance with the practice of the time, his estates passed into the hands of the king as guardian of all minor heirs. In the case of the young Earl Richard of Gloucester, Henry III first appointed as his guardian Hubert de Burgh, Earl of Kent, Justiciary of England, the third husband of Richard's mother Isabella of Gloucester. Two years later, on Hubert's fall from favour, the ward was handed over to the care of Peter des Roches, Bishop of Winchester. The young earl was the stepson of the King's brother and both the King and Queen Eleanor were interested in the matrimonial projects that were early afoot for this youth of such great possessions. The King's choice among the possible brides finally fell upon the Earl of Lincoln's eldest daughter, Maud de Lacy, the earl agreeing to pay the King seven thousand marks for the honour. Hubert de Burgh, earl of Kent had formed plans of his own, and hurriedly and secretly married him to his own daughter Margaret. This open defiance of his wishes infuriated the King, and in 1236 de Burgh was impeached on account of the 'maritagium' of the young earl with his daughter. The King succeeded in getting the marriage annulled by the Pope and in the following year Earl Richard was duly married to Maud de Lacy, the Earl of Lincoln's daughter. The young earl, still only fifteen had little choice in the matter. However, his marriage to Maud proved to be exceptionally happy and she remained devoted for twenty-five years until his death in 1262.

Richard's personality was somewhat aggressive and constantly hot headed. He was constantly embroiled in disputes with the king, his neighbours, the monks or his tenants. Conversely he could be large hearted and generous, as quick to forgive as to take offence, pious and upright, an outstanding personality in the England of his day. He and the Countess Maud seem to have spent a considerable amount of their time at Tewkesbury, residing at Holme Castle.

In 1250 Earl Richard, holding high revel at Holme Castle at Christmastide, recorded the knighting of William de Wilton and Peter Boteler. Three years later he quarrelled with the King with whom he seemed to have been generally on good terms. In 1258 he incurred the hostility of the king's chief councillor Walter de Sesteny to such an extent that the latter attempted to poison both him and his brother William de Clare. Earl Richard recovered from the effects of the poisonous drug administered to him, after a long illness, though for the rest of his life he bore traces of the poisoning which had the effect of destroying his hair and nails. William de Clare succumbed to the poison and died. In the same year, and possibly resulting from his recent escape from death, Earl Richard became reconciled with the monks of Tewkesbury, with whom he had a long standing quarrel. On 20th August he was present at the abbey when a litany was said on his behalf, after which he gave the kiss of peace to each

of the brethren in turn, from the greatest to the least among them 'at which sign of reconciliation all rejoiced greatly'.

Although Earl Richard was constantly involved in disputes, he found time for many acts of piety. In 1248 he introduced the newly founded order of Augustine Friars into England, building a house for them at Tonbridge. He joined the Crusaders and went on a pilgrimage to the shrine of Edmund of Canterbury at Pontigny, the monks borrowing for him from the Jews a hundred marks towards the expenses of the journey. It is curious that a man of his immense possessions should need to borrow a hundred marks. Richard inherited vast properties and estates acquired by the de Clares sighted in virtually every county of southern England. His voracious needs were for income and cash to fund his many immediate projects. Ready money was always available (expensively) with Jews ready to supply it. Indicative of the spirit of the age towards the Jews can be seen from this extract by G.C. Coulton

1259 Concerning a Jewish merchant named Solomon:

'At Tewkesbury a Jewe fel into a gonge [latrine] in a Satirday, wolde suffer no man drawe hym up for reverence of his holy day. But Richard of Clare, erle of Gloucestre, wolde suffer no man drawe hym up on the morwe in Sunday for reverence of his holy day, and so the Jewe was dede.

Ref. p198 G.C. Coulton 'Life in the Middle Ages' Vol.IV. (Monks, Friars and Nuns) Cambridge U.P. 1930.

In the 'Mad' parliament which met at Oxford on 11th June 1258, Earl Richard shared with Simon de Montfort the leadership of the Barons' party, and his name appears at the head of the twelve appointed as Commissioners to carry out reforms. He shortly afterwards fell out with de Montfort who in anger, left the country and took little more part in affairs during the earl's lifetime. Among a variety of other posts held by Earl Richard were those of Commander-in-Chief of the forces employed in the Welsh war and of Ambassador to France and to Scotland. The king had no more powerful subject.

Earl Richard died at Emersfield in Kent in 1262. He is said to have fallen a victim to a second attempt on his life by means of poison, the man who instigated the crime being no less a person than the queen's uncle, Peter of Savoy. Baldwin, Earl of Devon, and others met the same fate. He was forty years of age at the time of his death, but his two score years had been full of incident. His death was regretted, not only by his widow and immediate relatives and friends, but by a far larger circle, judging from the number of indulgences granted by the Archbishop of Canterbury and those of the Bishops of Chester, Worcester and Llandaff to those who should pray for his soul.

In the Register of Tewkesbury he is represented as *Richardus de Clare Secundus Comes Glocesternae at Hertfordiae*. Richard was succeeded by his eldest son, Gilbert de Clare, who became known as the Red Earl. Gilbert fully inherited his father's turbulent disposition and similarly spent his life almost always embroiled in disputes. A prominent nobleman of England he is famous locally for his violent dispute with the Earl of Hereford over land and property.

St. Felix of Dunwich, Bishop of East Anglia

(Died AD 647)

Felix was a Burgundian priest, probably from one of the monastic houses founded by the Irish missionary, St. Columbanus. In AD 630, he travelled to England, where he was welcomed at the Archiepiscopal Court of St. Honorius at Canterbury. Felix stayed there but a few months, before the primate sent him to evangelise the people of King Sigebert of East Anglia. King Sigebert allowed him to establish his see at *Dommoc*, or *Dummocceastre*, generally accepted as Dunwich, a seaport on the coast of Suffolk (though some say it was Felixstowe). Dummoc had been a Roman station and, besides the advantage of its port, its walls may still have been strong enough to afford some protection for the new Bishop. It was, moreover, connected with the interior by ancient roads, which led in one direction toward Bury St. Edmunds and in another toward Norwich. At Dummoc, King Sigebert built a palace for himself and a church for Felix. Elsewhere, says Bede, "desiring to imitate those things which he had seen well arranged in Gaul, he founded a school in which boys might be taught letters, with the aid of Felix, the bishop....who furnished them with pedagogues and masters, after the Kentish fashion." Bede gives no locality for this school; yet the passage, without the slightest reason, has been looked upon as recording the foundation of the University of Cambridge, a place which, at that period, was not even within the borders of East Anglia. Four years after the establishment of the see, the King resigned his crown in favour of his cousin, Egric, and retired to a monastery which he had founded with the Irish monk, Fursey, at Burgh Castle. Felix founded a third monastery at Soham and it was here that he died, on 8th March AD 647, and was buried. His relics were later translated to Ramsey Abbey (Hunts).

St Gregory's Church, Sudbury

The existing church is on the site of a much earlier building. In Saxon times, as a Minster, it was of considerable importance. The church at Sudbury was nominated a centre of administration by St Felix of Dunwich c 631 and the Saxon Chronicle records Ælfwin, Bishop of Dunwich as having died at Sudbury in 797.

late in the 10th century, Æthelflæda widow of Earl Brithnoth of East Anglia, gave land at Waldingfield to St Gregory's. It was she who was one of the founders of Ely Cathedral, later to be developed by the Normans. Sudbury was for long in the diocese of Ely and only relatively recently was transferred to the diocese of St Edmundsbury.

St Gregory was named after Gregory the Great (Pope 590-604) and is one of 32 churches dedicated to his name. Gregory was responsible for sending missionaries to Saxon England under St Augustine (597) who later became the first Archbishop of Canterbury.

At Domesday, it is recorded that St Gregory's possessed 50 acres of arable land and 25 acres of meadow. Prior to the Norman Conquest, the manor belonged to the powerful Earl Morcar who was killed sometime after the Conquest in a rebellion against Norman rule. His estates were given by Henry I, the youngest son of William the Conqueror, to his son, Earl of Gloucester. They then passed through female descent to the de Clare family. In the 12th century Amicia de Clare, apparently complied with the wishes of her father William FitzRobert, Earl of Gloucester, and gave the advowson of St Gregory's to the nuns of Eaton in Warwickshire in whose gift it remained until 1374. *The "advowson" is the right of bestowal of a benefice.*

St Peter's Church, Sudbury

The church is built on the site of what was called "*The Chappel of Saint Peter*" and was evidently a chapel of ease in connection with St Gregory's.

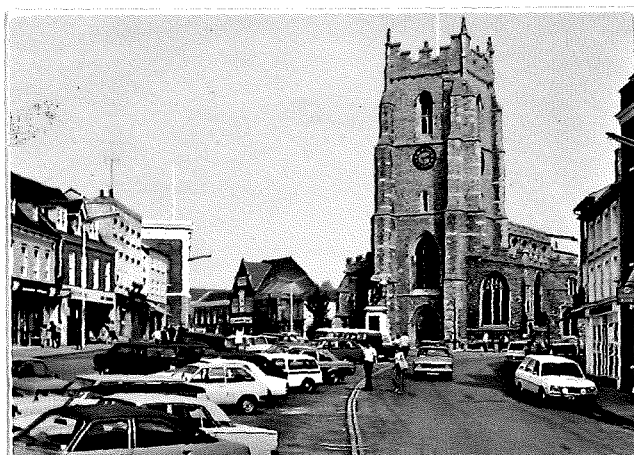
St Peter's Chapel¹ was part of the advowson to the nuns of Eaton in Warwickshire².

No record exists of the date of original construction but it would be prior to 970 as it was mentioned in a will of that date. A deed worded sometime between 1147 and 1183 (when Earl William of Gloucester died) mentions the Chapel of St Peter "*by Grant of William Fitz-Robert, Earl of Gloucester and lord of the manor of Sudbury, the Church of St Gregory and the Chapel of St Peter were given to the nuns of Eaton in Warwickshire.*"

The properties of St Gregory's and St Peter's appear to have remained in the gift to the nuns of Eaton until 1374 when all was returned to Sudbury. They were to complement the College founded in 1360 by Simon of Sudbury, then Bishop of London. He later became Archbishop of Canterbury and Chancellor of England, until in 1381 he was beheaded³ on Tower Hill by Wat Tyler's rebels, during the reign of Richard II.

At some time between 1480 and 1485 the present church of St Peter's was built and constructed as it is to be seen today. Much damage was done to this church and to St Gregory's in 1643 by the 'Parliamentary Visitor' the Puritan William Dowsing who destroyed ceilings, windows and decorative features of the churches in Suffolk.

St Peter's Church closed for regular worship in March 1971 and was officially declared redundant in 1972. The Church provides a venue for a multitude of community activities and remains the focal jewel of Sudbury's town centre.



¹ The small parish of St Peter's is a small island surrounded by that of St Gregory's parish.

² Eaton later became known as Nuneaton, for the Benedictine nunnery there.

³ Archbishop Sudbury's head was collected by men of Sudbury and is preserved and interred at St Gregory's. His body is buried in Canterbury Cathedral.

The Church of All Hallows or All Saints, Sudbury

Situated within an angle formed by the main street at the southwest entrance of the town and only a few hundred yards from the river Stour that separates the counties of Suffolk and Essex. Ancient and established but not mentioned in Domesday, it being secondary to St. Gregory the more senior parochial church of Sudbury.

The existing church, the second of two, or more buildings upon these foundations, serves a parish of Sudbury and in addition includes Ballingdon and Brundon in Essex. In 1150, documentary evidence indicates that the Church with a chapel for Belidune [Ballingdon] was purchased of Eli de Sumer, by Adam the monk, Cellarer of the Abbey of St Alban's.

This is a large and finely built, church typically found among the old medieval wool towns of East Anglia. The large tower originally contained five bells of great weight that were among the heaviest in the county. A spire was considered to have become unsafe and was removed in 1832.

Income for the church appears to have been limited as is often the case with town churches. Tithes seem to be restricted and glebe land is limited to the vicarage gardens and those of two adjacent cottages. In 1778, a 'little meadow' of three and a half acres was purchased in Ballingdon and in 1847 a purchase was made of an acre and five poles of orchard pasture near the church.

The church registers of All Saints parish commenced in 1564.

The Knights of St John of Jerusalem

This Order of Knights came into England in 1100, eight years after their institution. Their superior was held in great esteem and was placed in first position of the lay barons in parliament. Roger, Earl of Clare was a distinguished patron of the Templars. Amicia, daughter of William, Earl of Gloucester and wife of Richard de Clare founded a hospital in Sudbury, during the reign of King John. The building was on a piece of ground near the Bridge, on the right when going towards Ballingdon. The site of the hospital is now known as 'Hospital Yard'. Endowed with the toll of the Bridge, fifteen houses in the town and with divers rents, the hospital received the sick, poor, aged and infirm and also the travellers on pilgrimage.

The Priory of Dominican Friars

Close by All Saints church was the estate of the friars who lived on alms and various rents and endowments. They were able to preach without hindrance and this included within the parish church. Baldwin of Shimperling erected the Priory in 1272 in the first year of Edward I. The friars were able to lead a more sociable life than is normally led by a monk in a monastery. The numbers of friars in residence would have been between five and twenty. The Priory church became a universal sepulchre selected for the burial of the wealthy and highborn local dignitaries. Many were from Essex families. Several were later removed to All Saints at the Dissolution.

An interesting interment at the Priory was that of Dame Alice de Insula, wife of Sir Robert Fitzwater, whose daughter 'Matilda the Fair' was the cause of the great discord between King John (1213) and the barons resulting in the Magna Carta agreement. The King, whose unrequited love of Matilda drove him to attempted murder and to banish Fitzwater and spoil Castle Baynard with other of his estates. Sir Robert Fitzwater was eventually reconciled to his

estates and was principle baron in the negotiations over the peoples freedom. He was buried at his home manor of Dunmow in Essex.

The Hamlet of Ballingdon

Baldinigcotum, Belidune, Balydon, Baliton or Ballingdon. In King Offa's Charta of 796, it is called Baldinigcotum. No mention of it is made in Domesday. Records suggest it has always been within the parish of All Saints. Earliest accounts refer to 'Ballingdon above the Bridge' administered with one court baron, the King being Lord of the Lete including part of Bulmer and the parishes of Brundon and Middleton. 'Ballingdon below the Bridge' having both a court lete and a court baron.

Ballingdon had originally been a part of the manor of Brundon which, following the Norman Conquest, belonged to the family of Limesi. In the reign of Edward I it belonged to Edmund Comyns. During 1377, first year of Richard II, the manor passed into the hands of Simon of Sudbury, Archbishop of Canterbury who gave it, together with other estates to the warden and chaplains of St Gregory's College in Sudbury. The manor of Ballingdon being then held by Sir John Cavendish, by knight's service.

Ballingdon was a chapelry annexed to All Saints. The chapel standing in the time of Henry I, when it was purchased with the Church of Elias de Sumery, for the Abbey of St Albans. A record of a survey taken about 1640 informs us that 'the parish (hamlet) belongs to the vicarage of All Saints in Sudbury. Thomas Eden, Esq., Clerk of the Star Chamber, in whose family it continued, resided at the Priory while his son, knighted in 1603, resided afterwards at Ballingdon Hall [of which only a sixth part still remains].

While Ballingdon was unmentioned by Domesday, Brundon [meaning brown-hill] appears as a distinct parish. At the Dissolution, Henry VIII granted the manor of Brundon, with the hall, the advowson of the rectory, Brundon Mill, Midelton and Ketchins in Bulmer, to Sir Thomas Paston, to be held of the King in capite, by knights service, in which family the right of presenting to the church continued for many years. It appears that the inhabitants of the parish were recorded in the registers of All Saints where they claimed a right [from Brundon] by long custom, to be seated in the church of All Saints. However, they also appear to have avoided the payment of any tithe or church-rates.

Brundon Manor

Brundon is an ancient settlement and was formed against the old Roman road from Braintree to Melford. The ford at Brundon may have provided an important link from the west into late Saxon and early medieval Sudbury. 'Brundon' is of Saxon origin, meaning broom, brown or bramble hill. Possibly the name dates the settlement from around 750 AD.

Well established by the Norman Conquest when reference in the Domesday book to Wulfric of Brundon. He was one of four men who between them owned 86 fiscal acres. These were annexed afterwards by Richard de Clare. Listed as Branduna/Brumduna, passing from Saxon hands into those of the Norman, Ralph de Limesi (Limesies in the vicinity of Rouen). Domesday records of 1086 – that Ralph held the manor from William in demesne. The area is said to be two and a half hides less fifteen acres with another twenty acres added after 1066 by Hardwin. The manor amounts to approximately 300 acres with 19 heads of households, 7 villeins, 7 bordars and 4 serfs. There are 15 sheep, woodland for 10 swine and there are 32 acres of meadowlands.

Ralph de Limesi (c1040 – 1093) acquired extensive estates in England following the Conquest, including Cavendish and Sayham/Siam manor in Newton. Ralph appears to have received great affection and to have enjoyed the direct patronage of William the King. The Abbey at Hertford

was founded by Ralph de Limesi and his wife. The direct line of descent from Ralph de Limesi ended with the death of Hugh de Limesi without issue in 1223. By 1324 the manor of Brundon appears to have passed into the possession of Sir William Bottevillyn along with the manor of Newton through his marriage to Margaret de Moese.

The church at Brundon was originally subject to the church of St Andrew, Bulmer. A dispute in the 12th century was intervened by the Bishop of London and by decree dated 2 December 1178, the church of Brundon was declared a separate church, subject to an annual payment of two shillings to Bulmer. Ralph d' Hawterive (later to become Archdeacon of Colchester) was a Rector of Brundon.

The Benedictine abbey founded by Ralph de Limesi [completed ca 1095] was a cell of St Alban's Abbey. All Saints church and the chapel at Ballingdon were also part of the estate of St Alban's Abbey. Some form of kinship must have existed with William the King for him to have granted Ralph so many estates, although no positive, other than speculative, evidence exists to secure such an attachment.

Ralph de Limesi, a relation of Robert de Limesi, Bishop of Litchfield and Coventry, was a Norman Baron. Born 1040 he had a small Norman manor in Limesi, on the north side of the Seine Valley. Following the Conquest, William bestowed Ralph with 41 manors in England to which Ralph further added those of his wife Christina, sister of Prince Edgar, grandson of Edmund Ironside, brother of King Edward the Confessor.

Ralph died 1093 and was succeeded by his son and heir Ralph who married Halwise, Hadwise or Hawise and was succeeded by their son and heir Alan and he by son Gerard who married Amy, daughter of Trian de Hornelade of Bidun Limesi and had issue John de Limesi who married Alice daughter of Robert de Harcourt, afterwards wife of Walleran Earl of Warwick and died 1198 leaving a son Hugh who died 1223 without issue.

Ralph de Limesi held property and estates in many counties. The 41 manors conveyed by the King were:

7 Lordships in	Somerset	4 Lordships in	Devon	3 Lordships in	Essex
2	"	11	"	1	"
	Norfolk		Suffolk		Warwickshire
4	"	8	"	1	"
	Hertfordshire		Nottinghamshire		Northamptonshire

Ralph added the lands of Christina, sister of Edgar Ætheling. His principle seat was said to be Maxtake Castle near Solihull, county Warwick. Ralph II was a great benefactor to the Abbey of St Alban's. His wife Hawise appears to have first been married to Nigel de Bradwell.

Brundon appears to have suffered severe depopulation and this was probably caused by the plague known to have decimated the area.. Brundon become a manor of Bulmer Church, the building, near Brundon Wood, situated on the right hand of the road toward toward Brundon Hall, had collapsed in ruins by 1740 and the parishioners were sent to All Saints church at Sudbury. There were Rectors of Brundon until 1635. After 1652 the parish was no longer independent and its title had become known as Ballingdon cum Brundon otherwise as Billingham over Brunsden.

Bulmer, Essex (by Sudbury) Domesday – Bulenemera: Mascerel from Richard FitzGilbert. Bulmer- meaning Bull pond (where the bulls were led to drink) This village parish of Bulmer, St Andrew's includes the hamlets of Batt Hall, Finch Hill, Upper Houses, Lower Houses as well as the distinct communities of Bulmer Street (The Street) and Bulmer Tye (The Tye) the whole village comprising around 500 residents in total today compared with 733 residents recorded in the 1871 census. The district was at one time a thriving industry supporting the draperies of Sudbury.

Bulmer, St Andrew's – the Parish Church

The emphasis of the church building lies on its chancel which is unusually long, of early 14th century style, with a band inside going all the way and rising and falling to give way to the southern doorway, the windows, the sedilia, and the piscine. The Sedilia and the double Piscina have cusped arches on detached shafts. The chancel roof is much later, c1500 and has collar beams on braces with a little tracery in the spandrels. The braces rest on angel figures. The north arcade, also 14th century has octagonal piers and double-chamfered arches.

The west tower is 15th century, with diagonal buttresses, some flint and stone chequer-work at the base and at the battlements. An octagonal font is 15th century, bowl with foliage and with angels holding plain shields. The pulpit is of 18th century panelling with a little inlay.

Nonconformist Sudbury

(Dissident Separatists disobeying the rules of the Church of England)

William Foulks, the minister of All Saints' church was ejected in 1662. The church remained without a vicar and in 1670 it was reported to Bishop Reynolds of Norwich (and conveyed to the King) "that the Parish Church of All Saints', in the Towne of Sudbury, being without a minister, is made use of by Non-conformists and unlicensed Preachers".

NB. The place was unindowed. Orders were given that none should preach "without licenses and testimonials of their subscriptions". An entry in the Corporation Books of 5 October, 1669: "Whereas within this Towne of Sudbury at this day, there is no settled Minister but depends only upon the good-will and benevolence of the people, who, being a divided people, and the greater part of them averse from the Liturgy of the Church of England, does not only meet in Conventicles and absent themselves from the Public Worship of God in their own parish Churches, against ye known Law of England, but doe also refuse to pay and contribute towards a conforming Minister, as formerly they have done, for remedie of which great evill it is thought fitt, and this day agreed upon, that an Act of Parliament be endeavoured to be had for setting of a Maintenance upon an orthodox and conforming Minister for this Towne, by such way as that the Parliament shall finde most fitt". [Nothing further appears to have occurred!?!]

In 1672 the "Indulgence" was issued by the King, and application was made in due form by the Sudbury Separatists for a license for William Folkes of Great Cornard [the ejected All Saints vicar] to preach at the house of John Parish, Cross Street.

About 1681 'Mr Petto, the Nonconformist Preacher in the Barn', and others, were "presented" at Quarter Sessions, for not attending their parish church, but nothing came of it.

Mr Gatesby [the mayor] and the majority of the governing body of the town were evidently not unfavourable toward the Separatists. These included "Anabaptists, Independents, Presbyterians, Quakers, and other Dissenters; who never went to Church to hear Common Prayer, but frequented the Conventicles [meeting houses].

NOTE.

Thomas Fenn died 1818 aged 75 yrs

John Fenn (son) died 1829 aged 58 yrs.

Alan Shelley, July 2010.

Nonconformists

The Act of Uniformity in 1559 made the 'Church of England' the established Anglican Church

Sudbury has a long history of dissent from the Common Prayer and the Orthodox Church of England. From before the end of the 14th century the Lollard William Sawtree was influencing the area, before being burned as a heretic. Other followers of Wycliffe followed, finding much support in the district.

When Protestantism became the official religion under Edward VI many favoured the puritan belief. During the reign of Elizabeth I this term was applied to those groups of people separated from the Anglican Church. 'Anabaptists' who believed in delaying baptism until the candidate confesses their faith¹

Between 1640 and 1660 the Anglican Church became Presbyterian, a form of Calvinism where the church government is by representative assemblies of elders. This became the established form during the English Civil War.

George Fox from 1643 drew his convictions from the Seekers who had separated from the Church of England in the 16th 17th and 18th centuries and who prospered under Oliver Cromwell. Many emigrated to the New World². The Quakers came to Suffolk in 1655 and the teaching was spreading by 1657. Jail sentences were issued in 1659 and by 1661 4,230 Quakers nationwide had been imprisoned (due to their refusal to make the oath of Allegiance).

Sudbury Friends imprisoned in 1659 included Anthony Kettle, Anthony Appleby, and George Evans and locked up in Bury St Edmunds were Geoffrey Bullock, Richard Waite, Jonathan Christmas, Edward Hinds, Roger Hawkins, Robert Clarke, John Woodgate, William Woodgate, Joseph Riddlestone, and Charles Woodgate. Joseph Buroughs, John Sewell, John Hill (all names in the Sudbury Register of Friends Proceedings)

In 1664, Geoffrey Bullock and Richard Waite both of Sudbury purchased a messuage or tenement with a yard or orchard measuring one rood for the purpose of a 'Sudbury Meeting House' for Quaker Friends. At that time there was a bitter persecution of Nonconformists and the Quakers were taking the brunt of the attack because they insisted on holding their Meetings openly.

Small groups of dissenting 'friends' (Anabaptists, Quakers and others) were meeting in private houses, barns, and school halls. This was against the law of the Conventicle Act 1666 (16 Charles II) forbidding conventicles of more than five people (they were considered 'seditious').

The Church of All Saints' gained a reputation for liberal acceptance of visiting lecturers. William Foulkes the minister was ejected³ in 1662. The Reverend Samuel Crossman, Rector of Little Henney was a leader of the Nonconformists in Sudbury. During the Commonwealth he became Minister of All Saints. The church remained without a resident vicar and in 1672 it was reported to Bishop Reynolds of Norwich (and conveyed to the King as "made use of by Non-conformists and unlicensed Preachers"). For many years there was no settled Minister and it relied upon the 'good will of the divided people'.

A declaration of 'Indulgence' was made by Charles II in 1672 in an attempt to extend religious liberty to Protestant nonconformists and Roman Catholics by suspending the execution of penal laws that punished recusants. James II later in 1687 made a 'Declaration of Indulgence' allowing worship in houses or chapels as persons saw fit and ending the necessity to affirm religious oaths before gaining employment in government office. Anglicans on constitutional grounds opposed this.

Mr Samuel Petto, a worthy Sudbury pastor, believed to be the son of Sir William Petto of Chesterton, Warwickshire, educated Cambridge, was settled among the Dissenters. Petto was known to preach at

¹ Includes the Amish, Hutterites, and Mennonites. Also various sects including Seekers, Calvinists, Independents, Baptists, Ranters and others.

² In 1630 John Winthrop sailed with four ships [including John Wilson the Sudbury minister] 800 strong – "The Talbot", "The Arabella", "The Ambrose" and "The Jewel" each of 300 tons.

³ William Foulkes of Great Cornard, the ejected Vicar of All Saints was, by the Indulgence of 1672, able to preach at the house of John Parish in Cross Street.

the 'Barn'⁴. In 1681 he was presented at Quarter Sessions. He may have then emigrated with his close friend Giles Firmin to Massachusetts along with John Wilson. Samuel Blower was another preacher licensed as a general Congregational teacher.

In 1684 many allegations were lodged against John Catesby, the Mayor, accusing him of being favourable to Separatists, Anabaptists, Independents, Presbyterians, Quakers and other Dissenters who "never went to church to hear Common Prayer, but frequented the Conventicles." Mr Catesby⁵ and the majority of the governing body of the town were evidently not unfavourable toward the Separatists.⁶

An Act of Toleration initially relaxed worship in secret in 1689. Protestant nonconformists were then allowed to worship in their own way and to build their own meetinghouses. They continued to suffer social and political restrictions and there was even some persecution right up and into the 19th century.

Dissenters included wealthy families who were involved in local business and civic affairs. Non-Anglican protestant denominations were most prominently the Independents, Baptists, Methodists (founded by John Wesley in 1740) Presbyterians and Quakers.

There were several meeting places in Friars Street. At 'Greyfriars' 40 Friar Street (later St David's School Hall) a group was formed c1767⁷ under Thomas Fenn⁸ of Ballingdon and with an Independent Meeting Hall for Protestant Dissenters; Richard Chaplin, merchant, John Rolling Tanner (1 part) and Thomas Lambert, Gent, John Stammers, miller, Henry Parsonson, baker, Henry Goldsmith, tailor, Thomas goldsmith, tailor, William Brackett, bookseller & stationer, George Johnson, plumber & glazier, James Abbot, peruke maker, Daniel Herbert, woolcomber, Vernal Slipper, woolcomber, John Holman, draper, William Tozer, draper, Christopher Finch, clothier and Thomas Norman, farmer – The Goodwill and Trust – the Tenement or Meeting House, 2 December 1788 Thomas Gibbons of Hadleigh for Gibbons & Co. to Lambert & Co.

Possibly the most impressive of all Quaker testimonies, at least in the 18th century, was that against the payment of tithes and Church rates. One significant feature of the testimony against tithes was its effect on Quaker migration; it caused a large number of the Friends throughout the 18th century to seek new homes.

Sudbury Baptists in 1829 formed a formal church building on a site acquired in Church Street and their first minister in these premises in 1834 was Mr W. Reynolds. Miss Emily Ray who had left the Friars Street Congregational Church over which her father had been the minister gifted the Manse. The Methodists in 1863 built a chapel in Gregory Street later sold to the liberal association. They initially became united with the Wesleyans to become the United Wesleyans. In 1902 with the Rev. J. S. Hunt as first minister they opened St. John's Church at the bottom of York Road. When in 1934 they united to the Primitive Methodists, Sudbury became head of a circuit including Lavenham and Long Melford.

During the nineteenth century the Exclusive (Kelly) Brethren came to Sudbury meeting in homes the a room north of East Street, then the Old Post Office before the Odd Fellows Hall in Girling street before finally using the Assembly Hall in Suffolk Road. The Salvation Army came to Sudbury in 1882 mainly operating in the open on Market Hill before finally acquiring a permanent home in Station Road.

NOTE of interest: these children of Charles Thomas Shelley were each Christened at the Independent Meeting House, Friars Street – James 25/7/1858, Aylmer 11/3/1860, Aylmer 22/4/1866, George Alexander 26/6/1864 and Frederick William 8/6/1884.

Alan Shelley, September 2015

⁴ A barn of Robert Sewell was licensed for worship. This was possibly the barn known as St. Georges Barn, North Street, or another by tradition in Burkitt's Lane.

⁵ His son, Mark Catesby was born 1682, emigrated to America in 1712, famed for his botanical illustrations and scientific art.

⁶ The Extreme Tory High churchmen of the day regarded him 'an obnoxious chief magistrate who was a pluralist. Catesby held the offices of Mayor, Deputy Recorder, Justice of the Peace, Alderman, Coroner, Escheater and Clerk of the Market and for a long period before his Mayoralty was Town Clerk. He practised as Attorney-at-law in partnership with his brother George.

⁷ 20 May 1767 Mr John Addison to Thomas Fenn Elder Esq. and eight other Trustees – Release & settlement of a piece of ground and a Chapel or Meeting house there on lately erected in the parish of Saint Gregory in Sudbury.

⁸ This coincides with the reference on page 65 of "Grimwood & Kay" to a breakaway group from the old Meeting House that 20 years later returned to the "Great Meeting" under the Minster John Mead Ray. (He was a notable minister for 63 years). The final chapel and parsonage was erected in 1859.

The Textile Industry in Sudbury including the 'Shelley' Weavers

The major influence on the prosperity of the town, from the medieval period has been the production, weaving and trading of woollen cloth. Flemish weavers were introduced to Sudbury at the instigation of Edward III. At that time Simon Theobald of Sudbury had considerable influence on the King, having become Archbishop of Canterbury, Chancellor of England and Papal Nuncio to Edward in 1356.¹ He founded a college of priests at Sudbury, close to St Gregory's church and on the land of his father's house. The College acquired manors and property to become the largest land owner in Sudbury. The Archbishop met his death in the peasants revolt under Wat Tyler when he was executed by the mob on Tower Hill.

Sudbury continued to prosper through the wool trade when the three churches were rebuilt to indicate the wealth and importance of the town. The peak of prosperity was reached with the reign of the Tudors and began to decline after the Elizabethan period. Weaving of one sort or another remained constant in Sudbury. As the worsted industry declined, silk weaving and coconut matting were introduced. In the late 18th century, silk weavers came to Sudbury, from Spitalfields in London, where today the finest of silk weaving (Drapers to the Royal Family) is produced.

Early local woollen cloths were referred to as *burels* and *russets*, which became associated with Colchester in the first half of the thirteenth century. Mention is also made of *streits*, *worstedes* and *whites*. With the exception of the worsteds, these cloths were generally fulled.

Another cloth of the thirteenth century was *chalon*. Two separate guilds of weavers may have existed to regulate these quite different trades. The burel weavers were known as *telers* and the chalon makers, *tapeners*. Chalon looms were either single (producing blankets) or double for making quilts (of double fabric). Burel (cloth makers) used the warp-weighted loom while chalon makers used the two-beam loom. The chalon loom was able to produce much wider cloth than any other loom. In double form, two weavers sitting side-by-side could weave fabric exceeding four yards in width. This ability provided the chalon makers a living when the tailor-cloth industry went into depression at the end of the thirteenth century.

Competition came from the Flemish, broad horizontal loom developed in the thirteenth century. This was a faster loom which permitted a more even weave and better cloth. It also, by reducing the cost of production, provided cheaper cloth.

The precipitous decline of burel production c1260 was countered by a concurrent rise in the manufacture of chalons. No weavers appear to have been described specifically as tapeners, but there were chaloners, or chalon merchants, flourishing in the second half of the century. One such was known as Geoffrey, in Bulmer, at mid-century. A Matilda, the coster (stitcher) was active in Middleton (Sudbury) c1235. Her profession belongs to the manufacture of quilted, or double, chalons. Also, a Robert the quilter (*cuylder*) was recorded at Clare. It is most likely that Sudbury was a chalon market.

¹ Probably the most powerful commoner in the land.

Domesday describes production from the double chalon loom '*doubele werke that men clepeth tomannysshete*'. The cloths were being shipped from the port at Ipswich c1300.

NOTES.

Fulling could be done by foot or by mechanisation. The early foot fullers were very poor individuals often supplementing agricultural labour with additional work. The machine operators could amass considerable wealth from this important element of the industry (from around 1275). Cloth when woven was normally fulled in water mills, some of which had existed from Roman times. The material was then stretched on tenterhooks in tenterfields (perhaps Fullingpit Meadow, at Sudbury)

Drapers were dealers in the drapery trade. Clothiers were cloth merchants (employers). Bays were a light fabric. A Kember was a wool comber. Say was fine serge-like cloth. Webster was another term for a male weaver. A tod was a measure of 28 lbs of wool.

Bluefords were bunting (hand woven flags) produced for the Navy, following the decay of the old woollen shroud industry, when bunting was woven in its place.

A Background History of the Woollen Industry

The growth of Continental textile industries caused a heavy demand for wool. As a commodity, wool had been transported to the Netherlands, Baltic and Germany from the eleventh century. Clothmaking began in England and London, Winchester, York, Nottingham and Beverley were known for it. These towns produced high quality cloth from high quality wool.

East Anglian wool was inferior and cloth produced was on a small scale, controlled by guilds. Standards set by the guilds began the great era of medieval clothmaking. The Florentine Wool Guild was known to produce the finest cloth in Western Europe until the fourteenth century, and it demanded the highest quality of English wool.

Clothmaking which had begun in the eleventh century, was reaching higher standards by the thirteenth century and Sudbury was prospering from the sales of locally woven cloth.

English wool merchants had formed a confederation known as the Merchants of the Staple. The wool trade peaked in the thirteenth century and had virtually died out by the fifteenth century. Wool was exported through the 'Staple towns' such as Colchester or Ipswich. There were fifty-one grades of wool, of which Suffolk wool was near the bottom grade. Herefordshire and Shropshire were considered the best wool raising areas.

A gap in the breakdown of demand for wool in the thirteenth century coincided with an increasing demand for woven cloth. The rise in the Hanseatic League lessened the powers of the Staplers. Taxes were heavy and wool-brokers were forced to make adjustments.

The Flemings arrived in the Middle Ages to improve weaving standards. They had started arriving in the eleventh century and steadily settled in England as they escaped war and flooding. This carried on right through in to the seventeenth century. A major period of settlement occurred during the fourteenth century, encouraged by Edward III who was married to a Flemming.

Cloth, during that period, was simply described as 'draps' and taxed at 1d a piece. In 1315, an Act was passed to ensure regularity. Worsted and 'aylehams' were known as 'cogwares', 'vesses' and 'old hames' and were to be sold at proper lengths, thirty yards apiece and not less. In 1336 an Ordinance forbade the export of English cloth and the import of foreign textiles. Skilled foreign craftsmen were encouraged to settle. Clothmaking in East Anglia became the principal industry because of the Flemish influence.

The 'old draperies' were regulated by the guild system. Clothiers and drapers controlled the clothmaking and were inclined to impose depressive wage controls. Manufacturing methods had changed between the woollens and the worsteds. Materials were known as Suffolk 'blues' and Essex 'whites'. To join a guild, it was necessary to be a property owner and to be a desirable character of good standing. Membership was passed from father to son. Membership could be achieved by purchase if suitably qualified. Children were apprenticed for seven years.

Clothiers and woolbrokers supplied the craftsmen with the raw materials. Wool was bought directly after shearing, purchased by the clothier and sold on credit to the producer. There were various stages of clothmaking and in the early days there was a degree of independence within each stage of operation. The semi-skilled were less organised. Sorting, carding and spinning was normally carried out by women and children, providing employment to the country poor. The more skilled craftsmen, weavers, dyers and finishers received apprenticeships in their trade and held status accordingly.

Dyeing was an expensive process that, in turn, provided good income for these skilled workers. Gradually, the clothiers took over the control of all operations, employing the workers of each stage of the working from sheep to mercer. By the sixteenth century, the clothiers were firmly in control of the country industry. The clothiers, by employing their own weavers, were depriving the independent weavers of their livelihood. Tied weavers were paid low wages and were required to work long hours. The weaving was carried out in the weaver's own cottage but it was common for the clothier to own the loom.

Manufacture of the 'Old Draperies'

Cloth was required, by Parliament, only to be made within a Borough where manufacture was well (ten years) established. Weights and measures were carefully regulated. By the sixteenth century guilds were losing their control as the business expanded. Local government took measures to protect a town's own business. Master weavers were limited to the number of looms they were to have under their operation. Smaller weavers were to be employed by the clothiers who had enough yarn to keep them fully occupied.

London had the monopoly of the overseas trade, making most business dependent upon the London merchants.

The main categories of cloth were the 'single worsteds', 'double worsteds', 'half doubles', 'rays' and 'motleys'. These were references to quality and not to size. A 'single worsted' measured thirty yards by eighteen inches and was sometimes called 'roll' worsted as it was not folded. 'Doubles' and 'half doubles' were heavy fabrics measuring ten yards by eighteen inches and six yards by forty-five inches.

The 'ray' was a long striped cloth, measuring twenty-eight yards by fifty-four inches. 'Motleys' were smaller, the same size as a 'half double' and contained mixtures of colours, making them more expensive. It is unlikely that many 'rays' or 'motleys' were being produced in Sudbury. 'Large', 'medium' and 'small' worsteds of a light fabric were the usual products, ranging from fourteen yards by thirty-six inches to ten yards by twenty inches. 'Monks cloth' at twelve yards was twice the size of the higher quality 'canons cloth'. Sudbury 'cloths' were large rectangles six yards by two yards. 'Monks' and 'canons' were specialities of Sudbury.

During the fifteenth century, Norwich gained control over worsted manufacturing. Norwich dictated the types of cloth made - chiefly in Sudbury. Camlet was the highest quality "almost like silk" was the view of William Paston. Camlet cost 7s or 8s a yard, purple camlet cost 4s a yard. 'Bays' and 'says' were other high grade worsteds, but must not be confused with the lighter fabrics of the same names produced during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The cheapest worsteds were 'fustians' and 'bombazines' which had a cotton weft and a wool warp. Another cheap cloth of the period was 'stamyn' or 'red stamel', used to make petticoats and cloaks.

Suffolk was noted for its 'blues', 'azures' and 'plankets' of differing quality and colour. Most dyeing was done before weaving, to make fulling less important. The main dyes were indigo and woad, both of which were imported. Most Suffolk cloth was sold after dyeing, without further dressing, and sent to London for finishing. The cheapest fabrics were 'kersies' and 'straights' because they were light and woven in narrow lengths. 'Broadcloths' were more expensive because of their size. Broadcloth should measure twenty-eight yards twenty-eight inches by sixty-three inches and weigh thirty-eight pounds. 'Straightcloth' was exactly half the size and only nine and a half pounds. Measurements were assessed after the cloth had been scoured, milled, thickened and dried. 'Handwarpes' of white cloth known as 'Coxsall' after Coggeshall and 'Glandesfords' (Glemsford) were sixty-three inches wide of any length but weighing three pounds per yard.

Socially and economically, the Middle Ages reach their peak at the beginning of the fourteenth century. During the fourteenth century a decline occurred, affected by a variety of reasons, that would bring poverty to the highly populated borough towns. In 1348, following widespread crop failures and cattle disease, came the onset of the Black Death, virulent for the next three hundred years. Continental wars also affected trade and the exportation of cloth.

By the seventeenth century the 'old draperies' were in an advanced state of decay. Clothiers could no longer employ men to produce cloth for which there was no sale. Unemployment led to many clothworkers leaving the region to find work in Yorkshire and Holland, where business was expanding.

The New Draperies²

Imported wool was now being spun on wheels rather than the old method on the distaff. This made it possible for semi-skilled labour to produce finer yarn. Unemployed paupers were put to spinning yarn.

The beginning of the 'new draperies' can be dated from the first part of the reign of Elizabeth I, when the first Dutch Protestant refugees began to arrive. In 1563, the Statute of Artificers laid down that all but sons of the rich were to undergo seven years of apprenticeship in an approved industry. However, the Act was not applied to the 'new draperies' until the very end of the sixteenth century.

By the third quarter of the seventeenth century, Sudbury was the predominant town and centre of the industry in the region. In 1602, at Colchester, the weavers formed themselves into a Company of English Cloth Weavers. They assembled each year at the Moot Hall to elect a Warden and Committee to regulate trade and fix wages. This was set up to rival the Dutch Bay Hall and to resist an expanding 'Dutch' industry. Organisation of the 'new draperies' in East Anglia was never successfully achieved.

During the eighteenth century, Norwich had an 'assured sale' of Norfolk cloth to the American colonies, which guaranteed the survival of the industry. The old medieval methods of commerce were no longer applicable to the radical policies applying to world markets. Readjustment was slow and there were widespread bankruptcies. Merchants banded together to form larger companies. Regulation was very different and the new concerns traded for the profit of their share-holders. The joint-stock companies were London based.

During the course of the sixteenth century, joint-stock enterprises were formed to trade all over the world. The old woollens and worsteds were not entirely suitable to the new trading countries and lighter (Dutch) fabrics were in demand.

The 'new draperies' resulted from a revolt against an ultra-conservatism. Norwich, Colchester and no doubt Sudbury to a lesser extent, blamed the Dutch for their misfortunes. The English Reformation fostered a large Nonconformist element in the population. Nonconformity became associated with the clothmaking industry. Clothmaking became confined to only a few towns and a large area of the countryside were reduced merely to the production of yarn. By the end of the sixteenth century pure woollen manufacture had virtually died out in East Anglia.

By the end of the seventeenth century an increasing unemployment situation in Sudbury was causing concern. The Sudbury Surveyor of Weavers instructed his inspectors in the town and in Long Melford, to enforce the regulations regarding apprenticeship. No master with more than two broadlooms, or three narrow-looms was to employ an apprentice who had not lived in the towns seven years, and were to foster industry within the towns, and to combat the rising amount of poverty.

² Bays and says were introduced to the region in the 1570s by the Dutch Protestants. Bays had a worsted warp and woollen weft and says were similar except that they had a twill-weave. By 1700 the production of says was localised at Halstead and Sudbury, while Colchester specialised in bays, most of which went to Spain, Portugal and Latin America.

At that time, the Sudbury and Melford clothiers were mainly producing 'says' and other light cloths. Silk was also being produced, at a cheaper cost than in London. In 1696, the Sudbury say makers and the silk weavers were among those who petitioned the Government to stop the East India Company from importing similar fabrics into England.

As say-making disappeared, during the second decade of the eighteenth century, it was replaced by the manufacture of crapes (black silk fabrics) and bunting. Suffolk generally, became increasingly dependent upon yarn making as the cloth weaving declined.

Seventeenth Century Sudbury and the Shelleys

Much has already been said about the powerful influence that the Clothiers had over the workforce and general welfare of Sudbury.

In 1631, the Justices of the Peace for Essex called before them, the saymakers spinsters, weavers and combers of Sudbury, to find the cause of the saymakers, reducing the wages of the workpeople. The saymakers alleged that everyone in their trade did the same, but they would be content to pay such wages as the Justices thought right, if the same order was applied throughout the kingdom by proclamation or otherwise.

On 8 April 1631, the Justices, sitting at Halstead, made an order specifying what wages should be paid by the Sudbury saymakers to the spinsters and weavers, until 15 May, subject to further orders from Whitehall. They wrote to the Privy Council on 27 April to report what they had done. Spinners were to have a penny for every seven knots without deductions, and the weavers a shilling per pound weight for weaving white says, with a deduction of six pence per piece in says weighing over 5 lbs.

The clothiers in the Babergh hundred, stated that they could not go on with their trade, as the merchants were not buying their cloth. This was causing poverty, and the Justices of the Peace for Suffolk wrote to Whitehall from Sudbury in May, stating what measures they had taken for the relief of the poor, and praying the Lords to do something about it.

In July 1631, Daniel Byat (Alderman), Clement Shelley³ and Vincent Corke made statements, explaining the way in which petitions of the Sudbury weavers and spinsters against the Town's saymakers had been got up, - they had been advised to lay their case before the Privy Council by a gentleman of the neighbourhood who pitied the lot of the spinners - and had a grudge against the clothiers.

Fired by the success of the Sudbury weavers' in getting their wages increased, the poor of Colchester appealed to the Privy Council for the same to be done for them, but the men appointed by the Council to deal with the matter said, that raising wages could not relieve the poor, as they would simply be given less work.

³ Reference to the State Papers Domestic of Henry VIII.

In 1633, Daniel Byat was made Mayor of Sudbury. By 1641, the weaving industry had fallen on to very hard times. The cloth merchants of Suffolk presented a petition to Charles I on 10 February 1641, pleading that *"our cloths for the most part, for the space of this eighteen months remain upon our hands, our stocks lying dead therin, and we can maintain our trading no longer"*.

In 1648, Sudbury Corporation set out to regulate the weaving industry, by making an order on 31 October, laying down the number of looms one person might keep; binding the apprentices; every clothier or weaver to have served as an apprentice; journeymen to finish cloths before leaving a master; a penalty for spoiling work; a journeyman to weave four cloths after giving notice to leave; work not to be placed out of the town if it could be done satisfactorily within the town; overseers to try to settle controversies between masters and apprentices; masters seeking an apprentice to be bound to take the son of a poor artificer at the request of the overseers, churchwardens or Mayor, or be fined 20s.

Clothiers in the 1620s included Francis Longe and Thomas Cook of Sudbury. Saymakers in the 1650s at Sudbury included, Francis Ellit, John South, Edward Tompson and Thomas Must. In the 1670s, John Warner was known to be a clothier, and at that time the Quaker,⁴ Stephen Carter was recognised as a sayweaver with apprentices. During that period several master weavers were employing apprentices.

Among the few girl apprentices, in 1678, was Alice Shelly, daughter of Samuel Shelly of London, baker, deceased, who with the consent of Edward Gardner, described as her father in law (stepfather or guardian), was bound to weaver John Cook of Sudbury and his wife on 5 March 'to serve them from then unto the full end & terme of seaven yeares & at the end of the terme (to receive) double apparell'.⁵

In 1681, the Corporation revised the regulations for weavers, clothiers and apprentices that had been laid down in 1648, based on the Statute of Artificers of Queen Elizabeth's reign. Six men were to be appointed yearly, as overseers of the clothing trade. No clothier should have more than two broad looms or three say or narrow looms. No weaver should have more than two broad looms or five say or narrow looms. No clothier or weaver should apprentice the son of a husbandman or labourer unless he was bound by the churchwardens, with the consent of the Mayor. No clothier should take an apprentice, except one bound by the churchwardens or whose parents owned land worth 40 shillings a year. No clothier, fuller, shearman, weaver, tailor or shoemaker, should have more than three apprentices unless he kept one journeyman. Only someone over 24 years of age, could set up as a clothier or weaver. Anyone taking a journeyman from another master, who had not properly completed his work for his first master, might lose his freedom of the Borough, or be fined. Other regulations dealt with bad work and disputes.

⁴ In 1710, reference is made to clothiers associated with Friars Street Chapel, these were John Fenn, Thomas Parish, Pleasant Spring, Abraham Griggs, John Fenn junior, Thomas Gainsborough, Robert and James Hasell and John Griggs of Ballingdon. In 1728, Thomas Griggs is described, Cloth merchant, Ballingdon. He became bankrupt then recovered, back into trade.

⁵ An Alice Shelley married Thomas Hayward in 1696, Sudbury. (A James Hayward was known to have been an apprentice of Thomas Shelley, weaver, referred to on the 1703 Sudbury Freemen's Roll).

In 1690, the woollen trade was suffering from a slump in exports to Africa, and in October the clothiers of Suffolk and Essex petitioned parliament, pointing out that they had great quantities of cloth left on their hands, and since there was only one buyer (for these materials), the Africa Company, they were forced to sell at whatever low price the Company offered. This was ruining many families who depended on the trade. The Commons referred the petition to their Committee considering African trade.

More problems for Sudbury clothiers came in 1687, when they began receiving payments and were forced into transactions using the newly formed Bank of England bills, instead of ready money. Bills discounted up to 18% of the trade value. The wool trade was also affected by Parliament trying to raise funds for war and imposing duties on goods. A proposed duty on exported cloth of twelve guineas a tun, was followed by the suggestion of imposing a duty of 10% on the value of all woollen goods.

Another petition was sent to parliament on 3 April 1697, saying that losses had already reached 5% and another 10% would be impoverishing and would put many poor people out of work. The plea was upheld and on 5 April, a Bill was introduced to encourage the woollen manufactures and to regulate exportation.

A Roll of Sudbury Burgesses (Freemen) listed in 1703, contains references to the Shelley family. Thomas Shelley is listed as son of Richard Shelley and Philip Shelley is listed as son of Thomas Shelley. Thomas senior is known to have been a say weaver employing men/apprentices (mid and late (1600s). His father Richard, deceased, presumably was also a weaver, and it is likely that Philip, his son, was following in the same tradition.

During the many years of woollen manufacture, Sudbury was an industrial centre providing apprenticeships, materials and the trading of finished and semi-finished products. The Town provided employment beyond Sudbury and involved the several outlying villages. These included the Essex villages of Bulmer, the Belchamps, Brundon and Borley. However, there must have been some competition for the spinning and yarnmaking services of the women and children of the countryside, as Halstead and Colchester required additional outside assistance.

The wool was first cleaned by 'beaters' (a skilled trade) then passed to the wool-combers, the combed wool would then be taken from the clothiers' warehouse to the spinners in the villages. The yarn, when collected, was given out to the weavers. After it was woven, fulled and stretched, the surface of the fabric was roughed by teazles and cut smooth by skilled shearmen. The clothiers then sent the bales to London, usually undyed, by their own or by public waggons.

Very few first hand records of the clothmaking business have survived. A Colchester clothier named Isaac Boggis, in the eighteenth century, had 'spinning houses' widely around Essex including Belchamp Walter, but all his weaving was done in Colchester.

In January 1766, the woolcombers are recorded as coming out in large numbers at Sudbury, all elegantly dressed, to celebrate the festival of Bishop Blaize. The weavers of Sudbury were known to celebrate the origins of the weaving industry, established in the reign of Edward III. On the feast of St Gregory, 12 March when they would proudly process round the town, carrying the 'Weavers Coat of Arms', and they included their brother, Flemmings, all elegantly dressed, 'colours flying and music playing'.

Weavers at Colchester operated in much way as in Sudbury, and they also proudly held annual processions to honour the mythical Bishop Blaize. They had 'club houses' at favourite inns, like the Weavers Arms, the Bishop Blaize and the Woolpack. Business in Colchester, however, appears to have revolved around the regulations set by the Dutch Bay Hall. The Dutch community finally disbanded, at Colchester, in 1728. In the 1770s people were turning away from local clothmaking, not taking apprentices, and many weavers migrated elsewhere.

It is clear that at this period the Shelley family, formerly weavers in Sudbury, turned to the blacksmithing trade. From the eighteenth century until the twentieth century, the Shelleys traded as blacksmiths, employing men, at Wigan End, East Street, Sudbury.

Postscript Notes:

The decline of the East Anglian cloth industry, at the end of the end of the 17th century can also be attributed to the rising status of industrialisation in the north. During the 18th century trade drifted toward the coal fields, where mechanised textile mills were becoming established. 'To the difficulties of the people of the sudbury district, at that time, was the added evidence of small pox'. Grimwood & Kay, Sudbury.

John Wyatt was a clothier in 1736. Thomas Griggs, of Ballingdon, cloth merchant, 1728, had begun as a yarn dealer and became bankrupt in 1730. Later he regained a foothold as a 'yarn master', purchaser of raw wool, which he had spun and sold. By 1742 he had again extended into the manufacture of cloth and was dealing in 'bluefords' (bunting) through his nephew, a London agent.⁶ His son was Joshua Griggs, tallow chandler, who sold his premises in St Peter's to Stephen Pettit, a wool stapler in 1736.

Robert Sparrow⁷ was a leading member of the Corporation in 1712. William Sparrow, a saymaker (relationship unknown, maybe son), was bankrupt in 1739. So were the typical conditions in Sudbury during those times.

Prominent Sudburians owed their prosperity to the woollen cloth industry, the Andrews family had prospered as merchants, and brothers John and Oliver in 1634 purchased the advowson of St Gregory. A famous painting by Thomas Gainsborough is that of squire Mr Robert Andrews and his wife Mary, at 'Aubries' Bulmer, with Sudbury in the background, painted c.1749.

Thomas Gainsborough, the artist, was born in 1727, the ninth and youngest child of John and Susannah Gainsborough and baptised in the Independent Meeting House. John was a clothier who had the monopoly in the town of making shrouds. It has been suggested he learned this trade at Coventry. It was in 1660 that Parliament had decreed that throughout the kingdom all burials must be in shrouds and that all shrouds must be made of wool. The father of John was Robert Gainsberry (son of Robert late of Ipswich, who had died in 1644). Robert, at aged 15 in 1658, began a 7 years apprenticeship to Edward Tompson, saymaster, at Sudbury.

Alan Shelley July 2005

⁶ See Allan W Berry's 'A Sudbury Weaver of the 1740s', 1988 (7 pp published by the author).

⁷ A recording in 1454 in London refers to Walter Shelley as Clerk, Citizen of London. In 1478 there is a record of John Shelley, Mercer of London, receiving 'gift of goods and property in Sudbury, from John Sparrow of Sudbury' (Ref; Cal of Close Rolls).

Sudbury St Gregory



The great south porch. The shrine of Our Lady of Sudbury was here once.



THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF WEAVERS.

The oldest recorded City Livery Company.

Mentioned in the Pipe Roll of 1130 and granted its first Charter by Henry II in 1155