An aerial illustration of St Benet's Abbey, showing a large stone church with a tall spire, a courtyard with a well, and various farm buildings. A river flows through the abbey grounds, and a stone bridge crosses it. The entire scene is rendered in a detailed, painterly style with a color palette of greens, blues, and earthy tones.

St Benet's Abbey

A GUIDE AND HISTORY



TIM PESTELL

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With a contribution on the architecture

by STEPHEN HEYWOOD

Illustrations by SUE WHITE



Stained glass window panel showing the abbey arms, now in a vestry at Norwich Cathedral.

Norfolk Archaeological Trust

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TJP, Epiphany 2007

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The Author

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Foreword by the Bishop of Norwich

The Church of England has many curiosities. One of them is that the Bishop of Norwich is also the Abbot of St Benet's. This abbey, alone in England, was not dissolved by King Henry VIII in the usual way but commanded to continue. It didn't and probably could not have done when monasticism was being destroyed all around it.

Though the abbey buildings have almost entirely disappeared, the site remains holy ground and has a special atmosphere. Here prayers were said daily, hospitality given and the rule of St Benedict was observed. During the past century the brethren of St Benet's have come to life again – a band of local men who meet to pray and continue that tradition. The annual open air service on the first Sunday in August has become a feature of the social and spiritual life of the Broads. And now that the site is in the care of the Norfolk Archaeological Trust we hope its future is secure.

This guidebook isn't simply about the curiosities, traditions and customs of the past. It serves to remind us of God's blessings in the present, and the way in which our land, our buildings and our faith are linked together in the service of God. May God continue to bless people here.

+ *Graham Norvic*

Graham Norvic:
The Rt Revd Graham James
The Lord Bishop of Norwich and Abbot of St Benet's

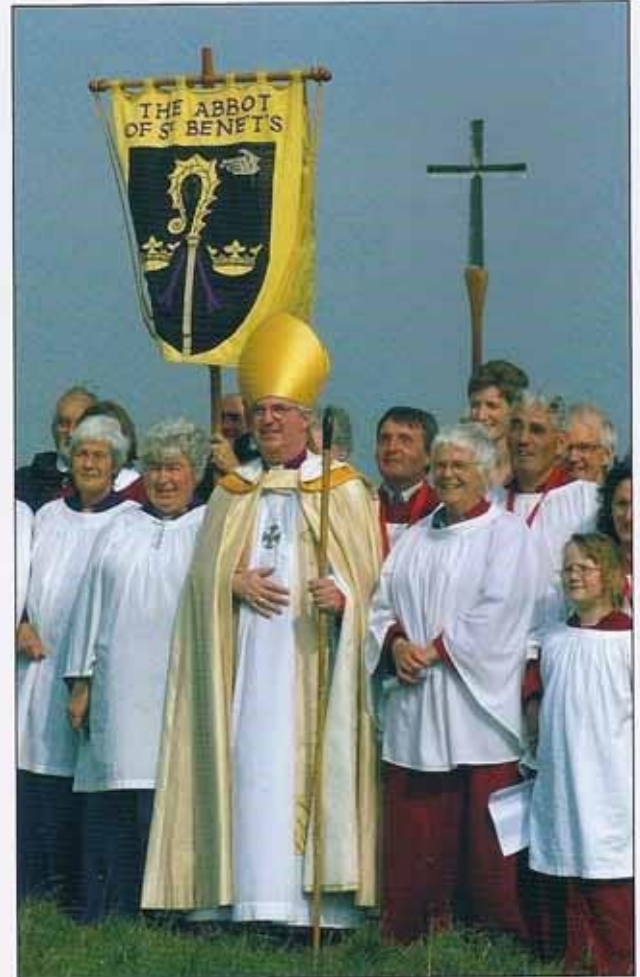


Figure 2 The Bishop of Norwich at the annual open-air service at St Benet's abbey. (Sue White)