

The Symbol of the Arrow

On the red shield of the Hales arms are three arrows pointed downward. King Edmund the Martyr was the first person I have discovered that used arrows as his symbol. Either the Hales family descends from this man or was strongly attached to him in some unknown way. Because of the practice of inheriting symbols, it seems likely that there is a Hales descent. Perhaps someone might discover his descendants and learn the significance of the arrow symbols.

King Edmund the Martyr

Born in 841 King Edmund died at Hoxne, Suffolk, England in 869 or 870 in his 29th year. [King Edmund is interred at Bury St. Edmund (or Saint Edmund's borough), Suffolk, England – approximately 40 miles west and south of Hales, Norfolk, England].

On Christmas Day 855, 14-year-old Edmund was acclaimed king of Norfolk by the ruling men and clergy of that county. The following year the leaders of Suffolk also made him their king.

For 15 years Edmund ruled over the East Angles with what all acknowledged as Christian dignity and justice. He himself seems to have modeled his piety on that of King David in the Old Testament, becoming especially proficient in reciting the Psalms in public worship.

From the year 866 his kingdom was increasingly threatened by Danish invasions. For four years the East Angles (Angles-land or England) managed to keep a



**King Edmund the
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shaky, often broken peace with them. Then the invaders burned Thetford. King Edmund's army attacked the Danes but could not defeat the marauders. Edmund was taken prisoner and became the target for Danish bowmen.

In a later account in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, reputedly derived second-hand from an eyewitness, Abbo compared Saint Edmund to Saint Sebastien and so he also became a saint invoked against the plague. The story goes that Edmund was captured at Hoxne. He refused to share his Christian kingdom with the heathen invaders, whereupon he was tied to a tree and shot with arrows, till his body was 'like a thistle covered with prickles;' then his head was struck off. He died with the name of Jesus on his lips.

The record continues that the Danes "killed the king and overcame all the land ... they destroyed all the churches that they came to, and at the same time reaching Peterborough,

killed the abbot and monks and burned and broke everything they found there.”

Saint Edmund remains the only English sovereign until the time of King Charles I to die for religious beliefs as well as the defense of his throne. Edmund was quickly revered as a martyr and cults appeared honoring him and spread widely during the middle ages.

King Saint Edmund is generally depicted as a bearded king holding his emblem – an arrow. Sometimes he is shown suspended from a tree and shot, or his head between the paws of a wolf. He is sometimes confused with Saint Sebastien, who is never portrayed as a king.

He is venerated at Bury Saint Edmund (or Saint Edmund’s borough), where his body is enshrined and a great abbey arose in 1020. Richard II invoked him as patron as to those threatened by the plague.

St. Edmund, King & Martyr: Lakenheath, Suffolk.

On the next page is a “paint on stone” from The Painted Church at Lakenheath, Suffolk, England.

Edmund is on a massive stone pier in the south aisle. He is standing just to the right of a complicated painting of squares forming a kind of open basket-weave pattern, with a further pattern of crosses, each end terminating in a stylized leaf or flower, and at the top are curling tendril-like details crowning the whole design. Most commentators believe the pattern to be earlier than St.

Edmund, who is partly superimposed on it. The pattern, which is certainly an unusual one, may have a relationship with the symbolic tree painted above the nave arches – the trunk of this can be seen apparently emerging



from the patterned area at the top.

Edmund, crowned and with a halo, raises his hand in blessing, and to the left of his figure, in effect appearing on the lining of his cloak, are three arrows pointing downwards and painted in fairly bright red. It looks as though the (very narrow) shafts of these may come together to form a single arrow-head, (or perhaps stuck in some sort of base) but it is hard to be sure, just as it is hard to

decide whether or not he is clenching the arrow-head in his right hand. The arrow is of course the most common of Edmund's attributes, and there are several other examples of this symbolic use of them in the other painting of the saint on this site.

Whatever the Hales descent, they preceded William the Conqueror and were not Normans. Most likely they were either Angles, Saxons or Icini (Celts).