

East Mersea Festival

Ronald Blythe, the well known author (many will have read his book, *Akenfield*, a portrait of an English Village) came to preach at the East Mersea Patronal Festival Eucharist on 20th November, St. Edmund's Day. We enjoyed his visit very much. The following week we got an honourable mention in his 'Diary' column in the Church Times ... as follows:

"Shadows Of The Evening

To St. Edmund's Church at East Mersea on St. Edmund's Day to preach at the patronal festival. Malcolm Oliver, the mast bellringer, drives me across the Strood to the dark flat island. The church is elegant and airy and gently lit by oil lamps. Its single Richard-the-Secondish bell clangs out over the black fields for the elevation. My address might have been called "Will the real Edmund stand up?" as I extricate the man from the myths. But it is not the saint who looms over me in this intensely evocative place but Sabine Baring-Gould, its formidable rector during the 1870s. I hear him rehearsing his fishermen-farmingsmuggling parishioners in "Now the day is over". Tall John Swallow now occupies his seat. The church is full, faces indistinct, and time thrown out by persistent notions of eternity. We get home dreadfully late for Malcolm, who has to drive the first commuter train from Colchester to London in the morning."

Footnote

Our member in East Mersea, Jim Sunnucks who kindly sent the item adds: "I think Blythe has got his Richards muddled up - 1430 seems to be about the true date."