

## The Todhunter Collection

WHEN JOHN LOUIS BENEDICT TODHUNTER (OBE) died on the 20th July 1980 the executors of his will wrote to the Vice-Chancellor's office at the University of East Anglia to inform them that provision had been made in his will to leave his "albums of Church notes and photographs" to the University. The matter was duly brought to the attention of Prof. Andrew Martindale, then Dean of the School of Fine Arts and Music, who subsequently arranged to visit Mrs Patricia Todhunter, John's widow, at her home in Suffolk in order to inspect the collection. What Prof. Martindale discovered upon his arrival at Gillingham Hall, Beccles was a "remarkable" collection that consisted of eighty-five fastidiously compiled volumes of photographs and notes. The value of John Todhunter's work as an historical document was immediately apparent to Prof. Martindale who promptly recommended to the University authorities that the gift be gratefully received and relocated to the School's photographic collection in the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts (where it is still housed today).



Interior view of St Mary Coslany taken by John Todhunter in 1943  
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Art Studies, Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, UEA

JOHN TODHUNTER started to document English Parish churches whilst an undergraduate at Trinity College, Cambridge in May 1924. After university, John trained as a barrister, and subsequently secured the position as legal advisor to the Ministry of Education in London. Over a period of fifty-one years (the last entry is dated November 1977) he visited, photographed and made detailed notes on two thousand one hundred and three churches from all over England, with a particular focus on those local to his home in East Anglia. Every church he surveyed for his project is represented in the folders by half-a-dozen or so exterior and interior photographs taken by Todhunter himself. The subject matter and format of these images are consistent throughout the volumes and are accompanied by a neat, hand-written account of the church that includes information about the building's history (often gleaned from pamphlets and guidebooks he collected from them) as well as a description of their architectural features.

TODHUNTER'S LIFELONG COMMITMENT to the documentation of parish churches made him an invaluable member and advisor to various local historical societies and church committees that shared his concern for their preservation and repair. However, as his wife later suggested in a newspaper article about her husband's bequest, his zeal for conservation only partially accounted for his embarking upon and continuing such a mammoth undertaking. For her, the numerous volumes should also be considered as devotional documents, records of the pilgrimages made by a Roman Catholic layman committed to ecumenism through education.

Dr Nick Warr  
Curator of Photographic Collections  
Department of Art History and World Art Studies  
SCVA, UEA

**SAINT MARY COSLANY  
NORWICH**

This grand practical example of a town parish church has chancel, transepts, nave, south porch with effigy chamber and round west tower. The interior length exclusive of the tower is about 50 feet and the nave is about 28 feet wide.

The chancel has six east windows of three lights high over the altar, & one north and two south five light windows. The walls have internal mural arcades of four centred arches. The roof is arch braced of a simple type. There is a beamed ceiling ornamented with arabesque bosses and well carved wall plates most of this is old work and the repairs have been careful.

The transepts rise to the full height of the nave and the manner of the coping in the archbraced roof is interesting and well continued. The column high north and south windows are of four lights with deep tracery. In the east walls of the transepts are three light windows over the former altars. The nave is of three bays each with a large high three light window above where the south porch is. The nave roof is arch braced of a simple elegant kind based outside.

The flintwork is excellent plain masonry.

The chancel arch is held on modern brackets, probably replacement of a former system planned to take the wood. There is a nave high. The stairs are on the north side.

The porch is handsome. It has a niche beneath a canopy between two single windows; the front is faced with freestone.

The round tower is apparently even, having double hung leaded glass windows.

The whole body of the church is perhaps of c 1440.

Effigies

The Renaissance font has a handled base and shields round the octagonal bowl. The Ionic cover has an elaborate cornice upon four pillars. It is no doubt Caroline & is a very elegant object.

There are six 10 balls with well carved misericords.

The communion table appears to be wholly modern reproducing

London work. In a sixteenth century or later spirit are incorporated some Elizabethan panels with twisted leads.

Monuments:-

In the chancel, in the space designed for an altar effigies - and perhaps in the case of the west wall again - is occasion for one - the elegant Early Renaissance type of monument with incised effigies:-

Hautin van Kuenbeck artist et medecin Doctor  
1579. He & his wife have motto "Dixi miserere nobis".

In the chancel a small kneeling monument in a low stall:- ... Hymn and wife 1589.

A good tablet. J. Wray fecit  
Thomas Howard Esq  
Alderman of this City  
d 1753 aet 41.

In Profrivity of Conduct  
He was an Honour to Himself  
By his Humanity  
A Hatfieldian is there etc

5. 18. 1. 1843  
14. 22. 1. 1843.

At this time the air raid damage was not great a fire bomb had damaged the roof of the south transept and coping and the timber was charred. All the seating was removed, but the reason for the presence of a decorative bench chair in the nave was not plain.

Notes on St Mary Coslany handwritten by John Todhunter, January 1943  
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