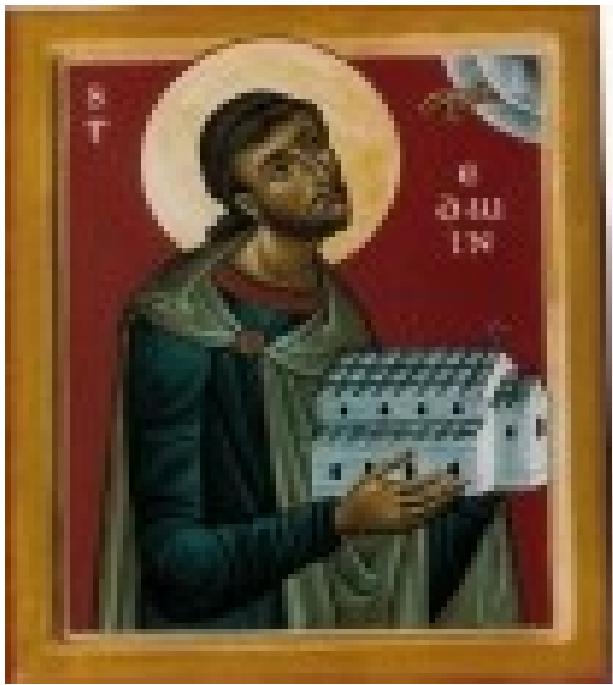


**The Living Tradition
of Saints
in the British Isles**

14 Northumbria

Community of St Bega, St Mungo and St Herbert
Fr John Musther, 16 Greta Villas, KESWICK, Cumbria CA12 5LJ
www.orthodoxcumbria.org



St Edwin

St Edwin and many of his subjects were baptised in York by St Paulinus in 627. St Edwin had sought the hand of St Ethelburga, daughter of St Ethelburg of Kent and the condition of fulfilling his request was that he and his people became Christian. St Paulinus, who had been sent from Rome to join St Augustine and, accompanied the Queen on her journey to the north baptised the people over 36 days..



This pool at Holystone in Northumbria has some amazing connections.

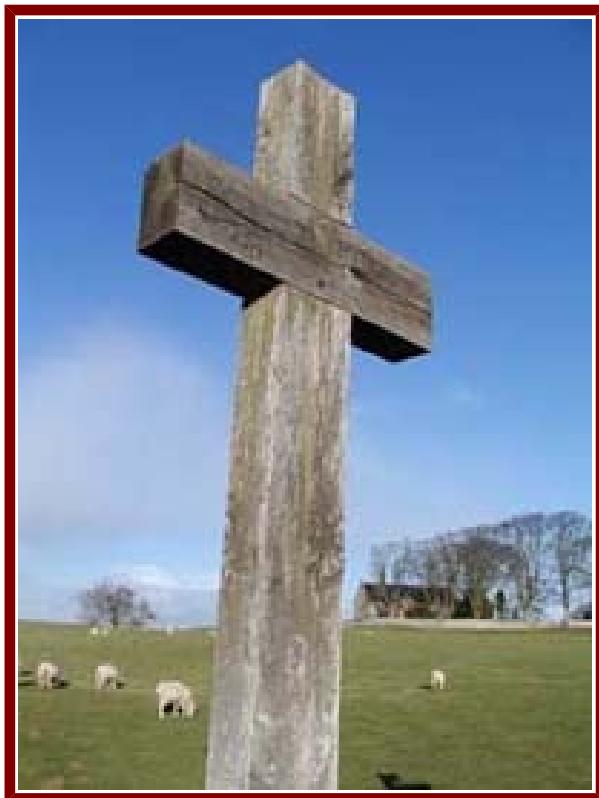
It was first called St Ninian's holy well after the saint who may have first evangelised in these parts. It is clearly an excellent pool for baptism by immersion.

It is also called St Paulinus' well being one of the places further north where St Edwin's subjects were baptised.

The name was changed again to Lady's well when a priory of nun's was set up in the 12C

St Paulinus us said to have founded churches at Whalley in Lancashire, Dewsbury in Yorkshire and another in Lincoln

The cross is a recent addition to the site



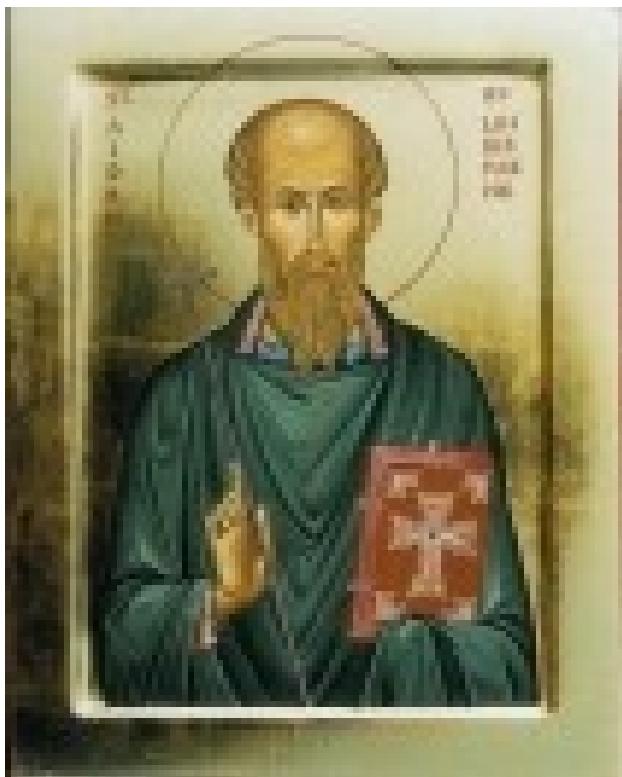
The church and cross at Heavenfield

Due to the politics royals often spent time in exile in another kingdom than their own.

Oswald, a royal Northumbrian, spent his exile in Iona and became a Christian due to Iona's influence. After the death of St Edwin in 633, he returned to the north east. After a vision of St Columba, St Oswald and his men erected a cross, prayed to Christ, and defeated their pagan opponents at Heavenfield. The site of the battlefield is marked by a church and a simple modern cross

It was usual in those days for the people to follow their king in matters of faith.

He became king over the two Anglian kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira with territory stretching right the way from the Firth of Forth in Scotland to the Humber and Mersey.



St Aidan
Aidan Hart

Oswald needed someone to teach his people the faith and so he sent to Iona. St Aidan, an Irish monk, with twelve others, was eventually sent. Oswald gave him Lindisfarne, a tidal island, to be the site of his monastery. It would have been a simple affair, with a small church, round bee-hive cells, and workshops. It was also a place of study and training. St Aidan was also made bishop of Lindisfarne. The site of his monastery lies under the present church; the later abbey stands next door.

The King's castle lay close nearby, at Bamburgh nearby, a powerful symbol of the unity of king, church and people.



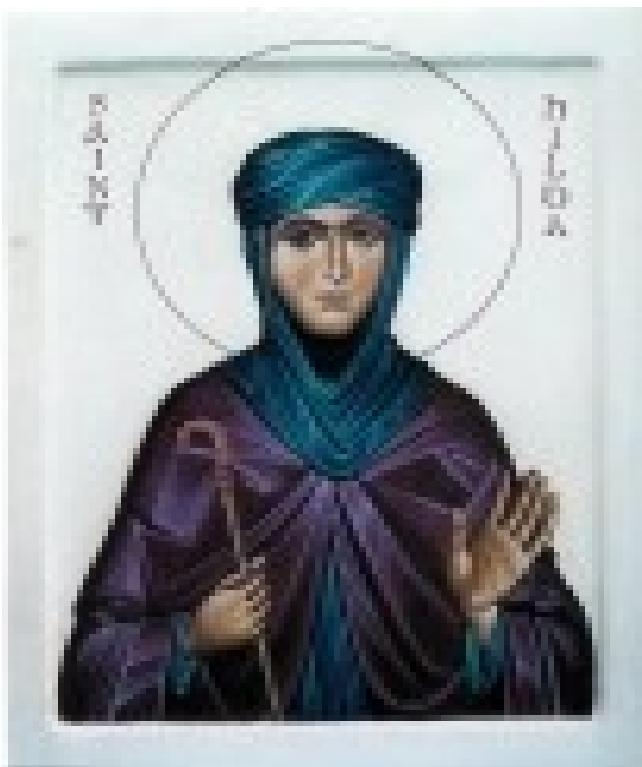
The hermitage on Lindisfarne

Lindisfarne is indisputably the Holy Island of Britain. Typically, in the tradition which St Aidan represents, islands like Iona, and others in Ireland, Wales and Gaul, were chosen for their solitude for the sake of prayer. But they were also bases for evangelism. Bede says: 'the highest recommendation of his teaching to all was that he and his followers lived as they taught'.

'He never sought or cared for worldly possessions, and loved to give away whatever he received from kings or wealthy folk. Whether in town or country, he always travelled on foot, unless compelled by necessity to ride, and whenever he met anyone, high or low, he stopped and spoke to them. If they were heathen, he urged them to be baptised; and if they were Christians, he strengthened their faith and inspired them by word and deed to live a good life and be generous to others. Aidan cultivated peace and love, purity and humility; he was above anger and greed and despised pride and conceit. He set himself to keep and teach the laws of God, and was diligent in study and in prayer. He used his priestly authority to check the proud and the powerful; he tenderly comforted the sick; he relieved and protected the poor. I greatly admire and love all these things about Aidan, because I have no doubt that they are pleasing to God."

The glory of Lindisfarne is the little hermitage on the island St Aidan used for prayer.

St Aidan died in the monastery where the present church now stands



St Hilda
Aidan Hart

St Heiu, an Irish royal, was made the first abbess of Hartlepool; but in 649 she went to another monastery at Tadcaster in North Yorkshire.

St. Aidan persuaded the great neice of St Edwin, St Hilda, to return from her own exile. She had been baptised along with St Edwin by St Paulinus. S Aidan consecrated her as abbess of Hartlepool after the departure of St Hieu, and in 657 as abbess-founder of Streonshalh, now known as Whitby.

This was a double monastery where the men and women lived separately, but worshipped together in church. Such double monasteries under an abbess were characteristic of very many Anglo-Saxon foundations.

St Hilda, one of most powerful women of Anglo-Saxon times, trained priest and bishops at her monastery,

Bede wrote, "All who knew her called her mother because of her outstanding devotion and grace". She died in 680

St Ebbe was another Anglian princess who founded monasteries, first at Ebchester in Co Durham, and another one at St Ebbe's Head, later known as Coldingham. This too was another double monastery ruled by an abbess.

St Etheldreda, the wife of St Edwin later became a nun at Coldingham



St Cedd's burial place at Lastingham

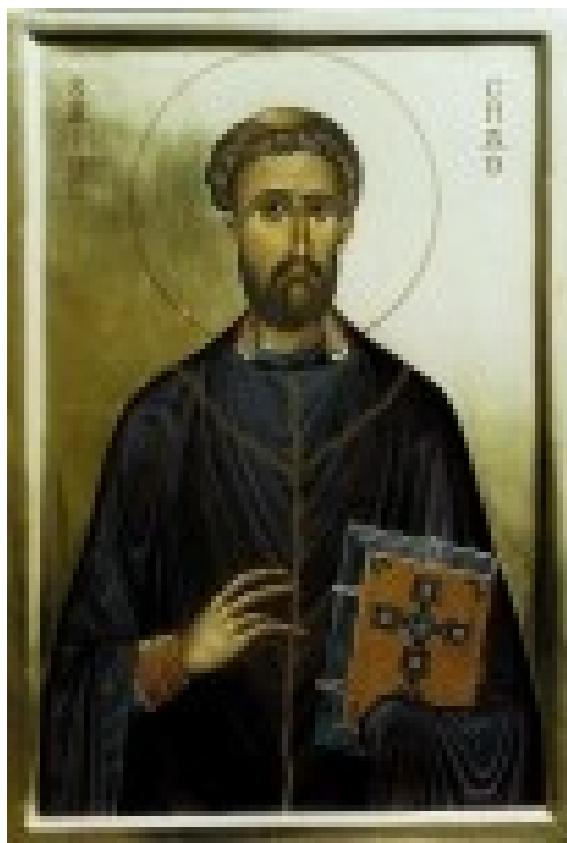
Oswiu, (Oswin) brother of St Oswald, took the throne after the latter's death. He conquered the Kingdom of Mercia in 655. Paeda, a subking of Mercia, married his daughter on condition that he became a Christian. He was baptised, and so was Sigeberht King of the East Angles, both due to Oswiu's diplomacy

The brothers St Cedd and St Chad were probably from the Northumbria nobility. They were educated at Lindisfarne by St Aidan. Like St Aidan, they belonged to the tradition of ascetic and peripatetic ministry associated with Iona and Ireland

But they were also proteges of King Oswiu, who sent St Cedd to evangelise Mercia. In the event , their king remained pagan.

A year later Oswiu sent St Cedd to be Bishop and evangelist in East Anglia. St Cedd was also made abbot of the monastery at the royal foundation of Lastingham on the wild North Yorkshire moors.

He died there of the plague in 664. A stone church replaced the wooden one and his shrine can still be seen in the crypt.



St Chad
Aidan Hart

King Oswiu wanted St Chad to be bishop over all Northumbria. But at the time he could find no one to ordain him except the Bishop of the West Saxons and two Welsh/British bishops.

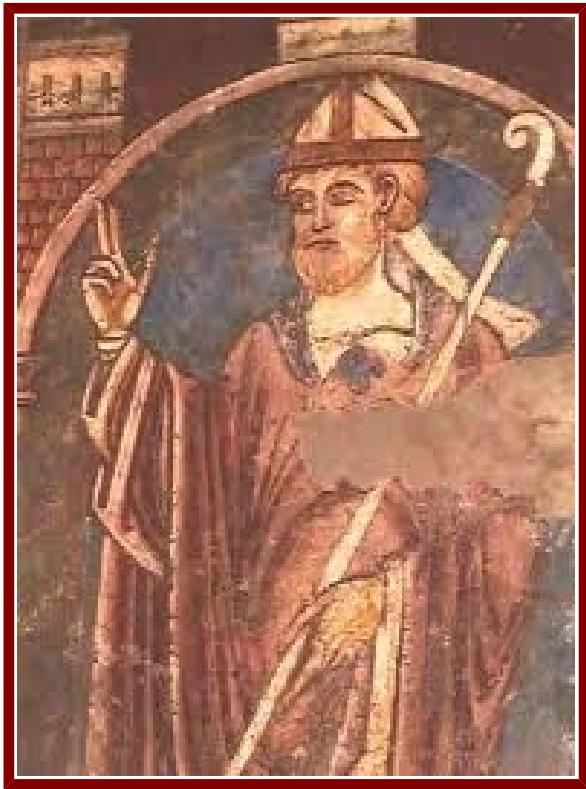
This shows that the British/Welsh were not quite so isolated from the Saxons as usually supposed.

But the ordination was not in accord the Roman canons: in 669 the new Archbishop of Canterbury, St Theodore of Tarsus, made St Chad step down.

Meanwhile King Wulfhere of Mercia had become a Christian. So St Theodore re-ordained St Chad and sent him from Lastingham to be Bishop of Mercia and Lindsey

The story of Northumbria began with great glory. But the days of the wide-ranging peripatetic monk bishops on the Irish and Northumbrian model were numbered. The arrival from Rome of Theodore along with Hadrian as abbot of St Augustine's Canterbury, signalled the development of smaller reformed dioceses, of men of learning based in urban centres. From now on a different order prevailed.

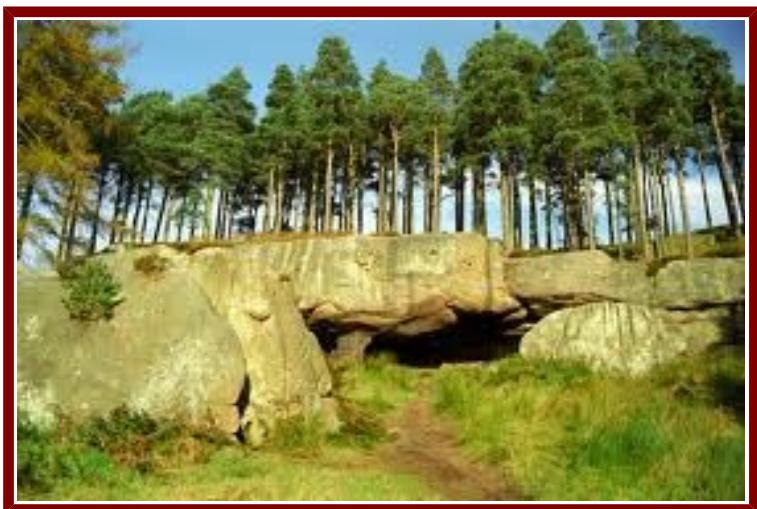
The Synod of Whitby in 664 signalled a tide that was coming in everywhere in Europe and it was not going to stop.



II painting of St Cuthbert in Durham Cathedral

Meanwhile, at Lindisfarne, St Finan, an Irishman from Iona, had taken over as Abbot of Lindisfarne from St Aidan in 651. He was succeeded by St Colman in 661. The time of the next bishops there, St Tuda (664) and St Eata (685), take us to the time of St Cuthbert

St Cuthbert, it is said, while still a shepherd boy, saw the soul of St Aidan being borne up to heaven on his death. He became a monk under St Boisil at Old Melrose on the river Tweed on the Scottish borders.



The Cave at Holburn

On St Boisil's death in 664 St Cuthbert became prior of Old Melrose. He ministered to people in much the same way as St Aidan had done. He travelled across the country from east and west several times from Berwick as far over as Galloway. He became known as a 'wonderworker'.

He also travelled into Scotland and made a cell and foundation at Dull in Perthshire, and also at Edinburgh

He reputedly used a cave at Holburn in the Kyloe hills in Northumberland for times of prayer

St Bede speaks of St Drithelm who, after appearing to die and see the horrors of hell, sat up on the funeral bier and began to tell everyone what he had seen He afterwards led a life of prayer and repentance at Old Melrose. He finally died about 700



Inner Farne

Geograph Paul Buckingham

In 676 St Cuthbert sought the solitary life and settled on one of the Farne islands, south of Lindisfarne. In 674 he was elected Bishop of Lindisfarne but after nine months retired again to the Farne Islands where he died in 687. It must have seemed then, as it still does today, like the passing of an age.

Many holy wells are dedicated to the Saint. The west end of Durham cathedral is built over a well and another, dedicated to St Cuthbert, lies nearby.

There is one at Bellingham, Northumberland, and another at Scorton (also Cuddy Keld) in North Yorkshire, with others in Cumbria

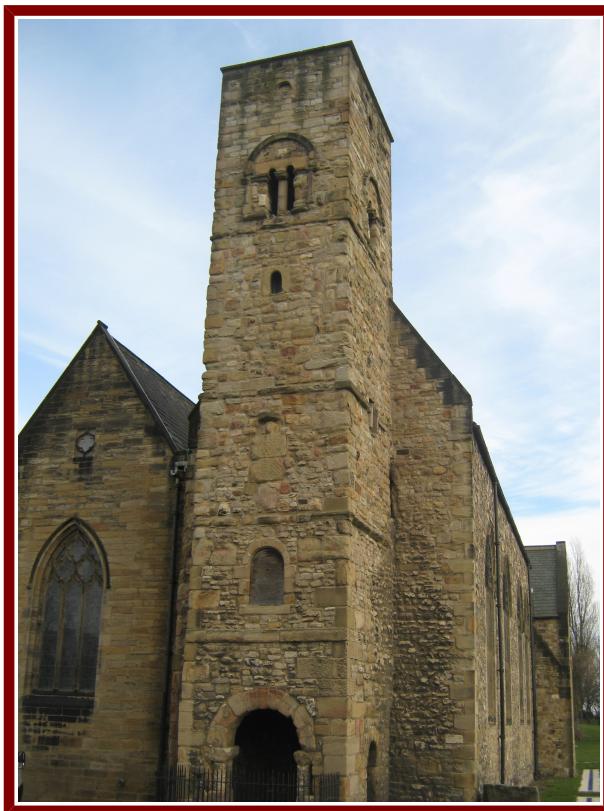


The Lindisfarne Gospel

The great Lindisfarne Gospel book was probably produced about 715 in honour of St Cuthbert.

In the 10C the first translation of the Gospels into the (Anglo-Saxon) English language was made from this book.

The monks of Lindisfarne set up a monastery at Abercorn 7 miles west of Edinburgh. St Trumin was made bishop by the Northumbrians in 681 but the Picts defeated them in battle in 685 and they had to return south.

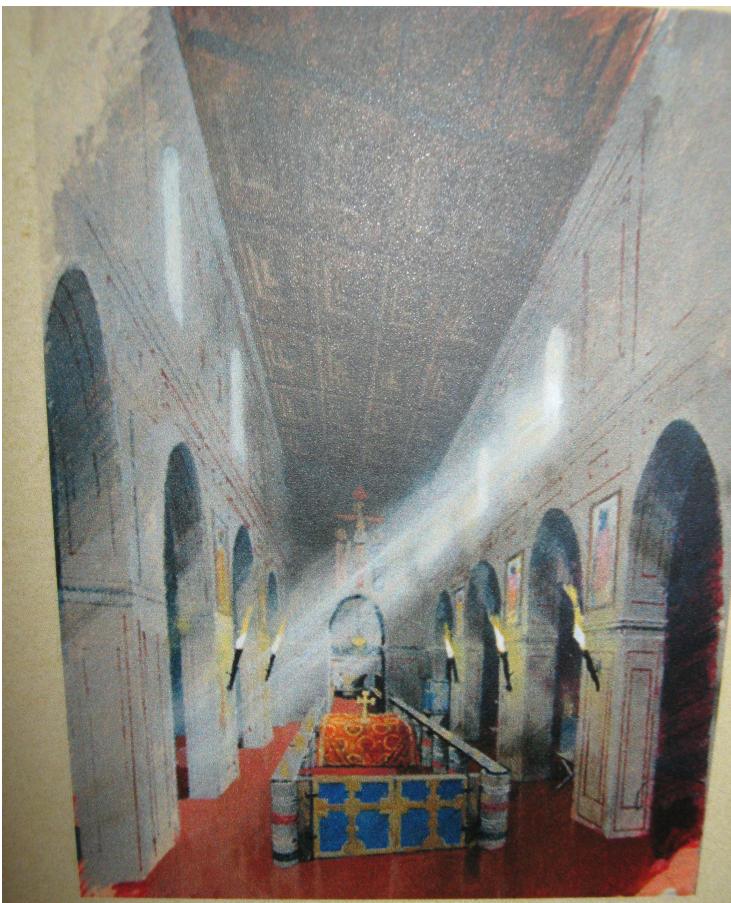


The lower part of the Tower of St Paul's
Monkswearmouth is the original.

The Synod of Whitby in 664 voted for the Roman date of Easter rather than the one used in Ireland, which itself had originally come from Rome. But Southern Ireland - with its own line of communications to the continent and Rome, had already changed as far back as 630.

Roman influence increased. One of the great facilitators of this was St Wilfred, but even more so St Benedict Biscop. He visited Rome five times. Not surprisingly he was stunned by the many stone churches and the skills with which they were adorned. On his second visit he stayed at the great monastery at Lerins and was tonsured as a monk. St Theodore of Canterbury, whom he accompanied to England, made him abbot of the Monastery of St Peter and St Paul in Canterbury. But in 674 he was granted land to build a monastery in Northumbria. So he visited the continent twice to bring back architects, builders and craftsmen of every kind, to begin building after the Roman manner, and not least books, relics and other necessities.

In 674 St Benedict founded the priory of Monks-wearmouth and another at Jarrow. These were the first stone built churches in Britain and, with their new-fangled glass and paintings on the walls, they must have looked astonishing. They were intended as models for the future. The library at Jarrow became world famous, second only to that of Rome.



Interior of St Paul's Church as it may
have been in Bede's day.

Jarrow must have caused astonishment and wonder

Some look at the achievement of the Irish monks in Northumbria, and of St Aidan and St Cuthbert in particular, but hesitate about that of St Benedict Biscop and St Bede. But this cannot be done. The Irish had been as thirsty of continental and overseas culture as ever St Benedict was. Irish and English share in abundance stone churches, the love of learning, the skills of book-making and illustration, the astonishing carving on High Crosses, and the hermit life. No difference can be seen between them.

The Northumbrians had every right to draw on what Rome had to offer. After all, according to the standards of Orthodoxy, the Pope was always the Patriarch of the West.



Crypt at Ripon

Ahilfrith, subking of Deira, set up a monastery at Ripon using monks from Melrose, shortly before 664. St Wilfred expelled the monks, including St Eata and St Cuthbert, and set it up on Benedictine lines.



The Crypt at Hexham

In 674 St Wilfred founded the abbey at Hexham on ideas that came from Rome - and on the material level with Roman stones taken from Hadrian's Wall. On entering the crypt, built to house the relics St Wilfred had acquired, we almost feel in Rome itself.

A Saxon bishop's throne also survives. Six of its eleven bishops were saints:

St Eata Bishop 686

St Cuthbert Bishop 687

St Wilfred Bishop 710

St John of Beverley 721

St Acca, Bishop 742 (Crosses of grave are in Hexham)

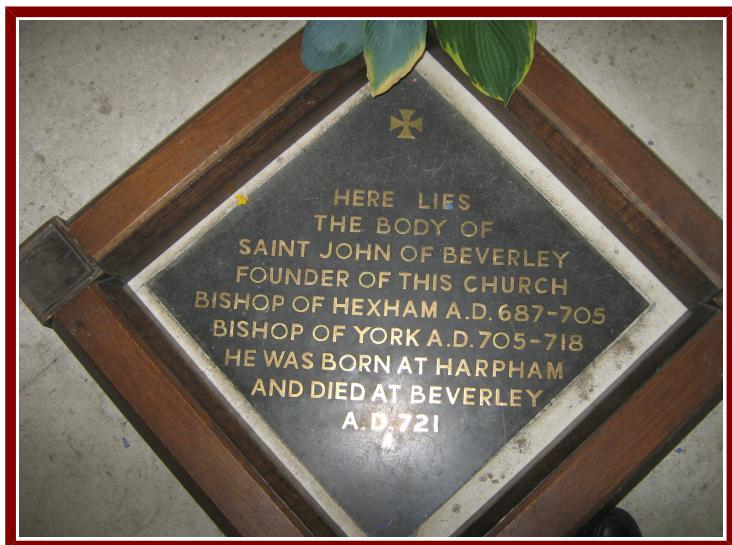
St Alcmund Bishop 781



Tomb of St Bede Durham

St Benedict Biscop's most outstanding pupil and a most prolific writer was St Bede. He became a monk at Jarrow under St Ceolfrith, the first abbot. St Bede's tomb is in Durham Cathedral

The monastery produced the Codex Amiatinus the earliest surviving manuscript of the complete Bible in the Latin Vulgate version.



Relics of St John at Beverley

St John Beverley was a monk of Whitby who became Bishop of Hexham as well as Bishop of York. He retired to the monastery at Beverley which he had founded. He was regarded as a saint in his lifetime and died in 721. His relics have been reburied in the nave.

There is a complete 7C church at Escomb west of Bishop Auckland in Co Durham, still standing and still being used. It was built of Roman stone and was frescoed. It may have belonged to an important monastic centre - but beyond that we simply don't know who could have built it. The remarkable thing is that it has survived.

St Everilda (7C) had a large monastery at Everingham Yorkshire, said to have had 980 nuns.

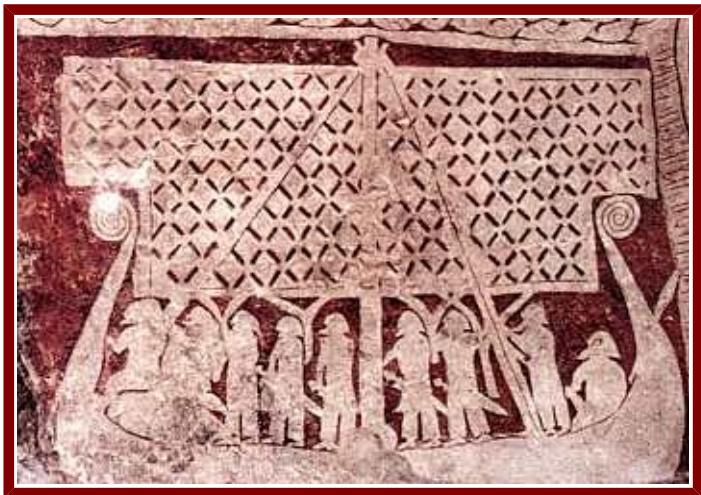


Bass Rock

In 681 Trumwine, a Northumbrian, was appointed bishop of the Picts with a base at Abercorn in West Lothian close to the Firth of Forth. This venture however was shortlived.

In 685 the Picts expelled the Northumbrians from the north. It had already lost control over Mercia. The Kingdom was in decline.

St Baldred was an 8C Northumbria monk of Lindisfarne who evangelised among the Britons in the Lothian region south of Edinburgh. He founded a monastery at Tynninghame, had a cave at Seacliff and a hermitage on Bass rock



793: The Vikings come



The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for the year 793 reads:

In this year dire portents appeared over Northumbria and sorely frightened the people. They consisted of immense whirlwinds and flashes of lightning, and fiery dragons were seen flying in the air. A great famine immediately followed these signs, and a little after that in the same year, on 8 June, the ravages of heathen men miserably destroyed God's church on Lindisfarne, with plunder and slaughter.

The Vikings plundered Lindisfarne in 793, Iona in 795 and Wearmouth and Jarrow in 794. It was the end of an era. Iona was abandoned in 843, Lindisfarne in 875, and Wearmouth-Jarrow sometime in the 9C.

The Danes took Northumbria in 867. It became part of the Danelaw



St Cuthbert's tomb Durham Cathedral

St Cuthbert's incorrupt body was removed from Lindisfarne when the Danes came in 875. It was taken to several places before resting at Chester-le-Street in Co Durham from 882 to 995 and then, due to further attacks by the Danes, to Ripon in Yorkshire.

A church, the predecessor of the Cathedral, was built for him in Durham.

The Normans, for all their power and prowess, were always concerned to assert their legitimacy. As the 'Johnny-come-lately' they wanted to be seen as respecting the Church and thereby no doubt hoped for some 'divine protection'. St Cuthbert's body was an ideal vehicle for the Normans to show this respect and so they built the most enormous building they could in his honour.

In this the Normans were not any different from most other conquerors. Many people slate the Normans for breaking tradition - with their loyalty to the Pope and in general preferring all things French. But this argument cuts both ways - the very honour they gave to St Cuthbert exalted him as the greatest local saint there ever was. That affection has always stuck.

Remarkably his relics survived the Reformation. His coffin, his cross, and vestment of Byzantine silk can still be seen at the cathedral, and of course his tomb.

His Life expressed the Living Tradition perfectly.



St Godric's Grave

The monasteries at Jarrow and Monkwearmouth were restored in 1074 but in 1083 the monks went to Durham.

Godric was an Englishman and perhaps even a pirate, but he came across Lindisfarne and 'met' St Cuthbert. He undertook several 'pilgrimages' in the Irish fashion but finally settled down at Finchale where he lived as a hermit for 60 years. We hear once more of a saint's kindness to animals and being consulted far and wide, in this case, reportedly no less than by the Pope and St Thomas A Becket. The site, in the bend of the Wear, overlooked by rocks, is typical of the place a hermit might have lived. He died in 1170. After his death a priory soon came into being. The Living Tradition was still alive.

Twenty six years later two monks from Durham moved to the site and eventually Finchale Priory was established as a dependency of Durham Cathedral. The inspiration lived on.

S Bartholomew of Farne was born at Whitby and also became a monk of Durham. He too had a vision of St Cuthbert and decided to become a hermit in St Cuthbert's old cell on the island of Farne where he lived for 42 years till his death in 1193

St John of Bridlington was prior of the Priory at Bridlington in Yorkshire. He was already recognised as a saint at his death in 1379. He was canonised shortly after, the last English saint to be so before the Reformation

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