

ST. OSYTH AND AYLESBURY

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THE local saints of Buckinghamshire¹ make a brief and uninspiring list. At first sight they reduce to St. Rumwold of Buckingham, whose death at the age of three days made his claim to sanctity hard to accept even in the Middle Ages, and master John Shorne, who was never canonised and whose legend is lost.² It would seem, however, that we should add to this number St. Firmin and St. Osyth. The body of St. Firmin is stated to rest in the abbey of Thorney in the catalogue of the principal relics of England embodied in the Peterborough Chronicle of Hugo Candidus, written during the twelfth century.³ The only at all well-known St. Firmin was an early bishop of Amiens; and if Thorney claimed to possess his body it was a shameless untruth which would have been treated at Amiens with the contempt it deserved. But we do not, in fact, know who the St. Firmin at Thorney was supposed to be. We only know that in early versions of the Resting Places of the Saints (of which there are several, the earliest being preserved in a manuscript of c. 1000) there is no mention of any St. Firmin at Thorney.⁴ His name is an addition found only in Hugo's version; and the relics concerned had presumably not reached Thorney long before. On the other hand, Domesday Book, for once really informative, tells us there was a minster at North Crawley (Bucks.) dedicated to St. Firmin before the Conquest.⁵ In terms of known Saxon dedications this is equivalent to saying that a man named Firmin, probably the founder of the monastery, was buried there. Pre-Conquest dedications are usually to biblical figures or very famous saints, such as Martin or Lawrence. When this is not so, the cause is either actual possession of the patron's relics or dependence on a monastery which possessed them. It therefore seems likely that the Firmin eventually translated to Thorney was originally buried at North Crawley; and, whoever he was, he was probably local and not the bishop of Amiens. The patron of North Crawley is described as "martyr" when the church is mentioned in the records of Bucks. archdeaconry at the end of the fifteenth century. But beyond that one can only say that his name is not English. How he was supposed to have reached Buckinghamshire and when, and the date of his feast, are things not known.

St. Osyth is a different matter. Her name, Osgyth, is undoubtedly English; but there was a sharp difference of opinion between the churches of Aylesbury and of Chich, now St. Osyth's near Clacton in Essex, as to which of them had the guardianship of her remains. The Essex church had, formally, the better of the argument; but the matter was not officially settled till 1502, in spite of the inequality of the contest between a rich and important Augustinian abbey

near London and what throughout the later Middle Ages was the parish church of a singularly undistinguished town. Aylesbury's strong card was that its claim was almost certainly correct; but we have reason to be thankful that it was disputed. Had it not been, we should probably know as little about the lady as we do about St. Firmin of North Crawley. If there were any chroniclers writing in Buckinghamshire in the Middle Ages (which seems doubtful), their writings have not survived; and no breviary from any monastery in Buckinghamshire or Oxfordshire, which would have given us the local legends, survives either. But about St. Osyth information is reasonably plentiful.

The idea that every saint must have a Life was slow in taking hold. At the popular level the only thing that mattered about a saint was that his (or her) relics would work miracles; or, if it is preferred, that an appeal to the saint to secure divine assistance, if made in proximity to his or her mortal remains, was found to be effectual. The discovery that this was so was liable to be made long after all details of the saint's life had been forgotten; and the details were, of course, irrelevant. On the one hand the efficacy of a saint's intercession was not dependent on the suppliant knowing the saint's life-history. On the other, the fact that he could intercede effectively proved that he had been a holy man; and the kind of things the man must have done to achieve holiness were perfectly well known. Lives were written partly as an advertisement for some shrine, partly because (as a matter of prestige) it was more distinguished if a Life of the patron of any church did exist, and partly to provide edification. A competent author could easily sketch out a holy life which "must be" roughly right, an incompetent one could lift it from the Life of some other saint. The same was true of the kind of miracles the saint "must have" performed both before and after his death. Unscrupulous hagiographers occasionally threw in details of strong popular appeal such as that St. Giles could procure absolution for unconfessed sins, or that God had promised St. Margaret that prayers uttered in oratories dedicated to her would be granted, hence the immense number of churches dedicated to these two saints. But, on the whole, hagiographers tried to be honest. They did, therefore, enquire for current traditions relating to the heroes of their biographies; and in the process naturally amassed a lot of floating folklore and stories originally told about other individuals, especially individuals with similar names.

The overwhelming mass of female Saxon saints were the foundresses of nunneries. Under the social conditions of the time these ladies were invariably members of royal or noble families whose decision to retire from the world involved a similar renunciation on the part of their possibly not very enthusiastic maids, and the devotion of the revenues of several manors to the maintenance of the community, including the chaplains. Most Saxon nunneries faded away fairly soon; but the church, the endowments, and therefore the chaplains, continued to exist. The foundress was likely to be buried in a prominent place in the church; the date of her death would probably be remembered since the chaplains would be expected to keep her anniversary; and her ancestry would probably also be known because her family would be certain to try to resume most of the endowments on the disappearance of the nuns. A moment's thought will show that there was probably very little else to be known about

her except her age at death and the state of her temper. But the mere fact that she had a prominent tomb was almost certain to lead in due course to someone making successful trial of her intercession.

At the time of the Conquest the church of Chich was a dependency of the see of London. It was served by a small body of chaplains, and they knew that the establishment had been founded by Osyth, that she had died on a 7th October, and that she was buried there. They probably also had a foundation charter, genuine or forged, with a date which they worked out at 653.⁶ Osyth's burial at Chich is accepted by all versions of the *Resting Places of the Saints*.

The community narrowly escaped suppression in the reign of William Rufus, but was finally converted into a priory, later raised to be an abbey, of Regular Canons. They required a Life of their patroness and one was produced.⁷ This makes her the daughter of a king Fredeswald, and of a queen Wilburga, daughter to Penda king of Mercia.⁸ Married to Sighere king of East Anglia, she refused to allow the marriage to be consummated, and was allowed to establish a nunnery at Chich where she was eventually murdered by pirates. The various Lives of St. Osyth are on the point of receiving detailed treatment by Mr. Bethell of Dublin University and I shall ignore all strictly Essex aspects of them. In this, apparently the earliest surviving, Life the only thing pointing away from purely Essex sources is the genealogical introduction.

The author has nothing to say about Fredeswald; he cannot even name the territory of which he was king. But the mention of Penda enables him to add that you can read about him in the third book of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, and that, though pagan himself, he had a great many most Christian descendants. To illustrate his point he names among his children king Peada, St. Kyneburga and St. Edburga, among his grandchildren St. Mildred, and among his great grandchildren St. Werburga, St. Elftreda and St. Elgida, on the authority of *The Chronicles*. Now king Peada, St. Kyneburga (of Castor by Peterborough), St. Mildred (of Minster in Thanet) and St. Werburga (of Chester) are perfectly well-known figures whose names can indeed be found in *The Chronicles* and if three female saints were not enough for the author, he could have added St. Kyneswitha (Kyneburga's sister) and SS. Milburga and Mildgytha (Mildred's sisters) who are mentioned alongside their sisters in any ordinary source.⁹ Instead he used a source which apparently omitted them, made St. Werburga a great granddaughter instead of a granddaughter as is normal, and added the wonderfully obscure names of Edburga, Elftreda and Elgida. The omission of Mildred's sisters makes it certain the source was not Kentish (and unlikely that it came from London or Essex) while the omission of St. Milburga (foundress of Wenlock), in conjunction with the error about St. Werburga, seems to rule out the N.W. midlands. Of the three added names, forgotten foundresses of forgotten nunneries, Elftreda is presumably Ælfthryth abbess of Repton who features in Felix's Life of St. Guthlac,¹⁰ and Elgida the saint buried, according to Hugo Candidus, at Bishop's Stortford.¹¹ Neither is otherwise known to have been of the Mercian royal family, but ladies bearing these names appear among the "Queens and abbesses" in the *Liber Vitae* of Durham,¹² so the Life of St. Osyth may well be right. Edburga must be the mysterious lady buried at Bicester.¹³ No legend is known to exist

or have existed for any of the three, the dates of their anniversaries are unknown, and only Edburga is invoked in any surviving library. It is clear that, to have hit upon saints of such phenomenal obscurity, the Essex author must have had a written source which should have come from somewhere N.W. of London. But apart from the genealogy, he appears to have taken nothing from it.

The most probable source for the document is, at first sight, Stortford, which belonged, like Chich, to the bishop of London; but a case can be made for it having been a Life of St. Edburga of Bicester. St. Elgida was utterly forgotten, whereas St. Edburga had a priory of Austin Canons established at her shrine in the twelfth century. It is likely to have succeeded to some small but ancient college, which might well have had some records. In any case the subsequent history of the Essex legend makes it fairly certain that the Osyth to whom the document referred, and whose parentage the writer wished to claim for his own patroness, was made to live, die, and above all be buried, at Aylesbury, which is why he made so little use of it. It should be added that the nature of the endowments of Aylesbury church make it evident that it began as a Saxon minster; and the name of its founder or foundress at least ought to have been known in the eleventh century.

The next document to be considered is the lost Life of St. Osyth by William de Vere, bishop of Hereford. Leland found a copy of it at Hereford which has since disappeared; and for our knowledge of it we are dependent on his brief notes and some short but continuous excerpts in two breviaries of Hereford. William de Vere was an Essex man and his mother was a great devotee of St. Osyth, spending most of her long widowhood as a kind of pensioner in the Essex monastery. The family had, however, relations living in Buckinghamshire, and William, in the Life which was to be the vehicle of the introduction of St. Osyth's cultus at Hereford, showed himself receptive of the Buckinghamshire legends. The way he disposed of the earlier hagiographer's problem was to say that, on account of pirate raids, the body of St. Osyth was of old transferred from the place of her martyrdom to Aylesbury and that it was supposed to have stayed there 46 years. How it had come back to Essex had been forgotten, "but we regard it as certain that her body was conveyed back to the place of her martyrdom". This certitude was not shared in Aylesbury.

Apart from various posthumous miracles, the new elements from Buckinghamshire, de Vere was thus able to introduce into his Life related to the saint's family. He said her parents lived at Quarrendon, and that she was brought up by her aunt Edith at Aylesbury. Fredeswald he described as a pagan; but Edith was a Christian, and so was Edith's sister Edburga who lived at Adderbury.¹⁴ He added the curious information that Edith had not been given Aylesbury by her father but by her mother. I do not fully understand Leland's Latin, which must summarise a lengthy anecdote in two or three words, but I think he means that Edith's father refused to give it to her but was persuaded to give it to her mother who handed it on. The only possible point of such a story would be that Edith wanted it to found a nunnery, a course to which her father was opposed. It is, again, not quite clear from Leland whether Edith and Edburga were sisters of Fredeswald or of Wilburga,

but the earlier Essex Life establishes that Edburga at least was Wilburga's sister so that Edith in her turn becomes, in Buckinghamshire tradition, yet another daughter of Penda.¹⁵ About Adderbury, de Vere said that it takes its name from this Edburga who owned it, that is ten leagues distant from Aylesbury,¹⁶ and that between the two towns there is a river that is often swollen into flood by rains and wind, which makes its passage difficult for travellers. The poor old Cherwell would hardly rate the grandiose expressions used if it were not going to be the setting for a story: but that story Leland did not copy out. Indirectly, nevertheless, we know what it was going to be.

The monastery of Burton-on-Trent, founded about the year 1000, had succeeded to the ownership of one of the usual extinct Saxon nunneries whose foundress Modwenna was buried in the church on an island in the Trent called Andersey.¹⁷ Apart from the fact that she died on 5th July nothing whatever, as usual, was known about her. However, by great good fortune, there arrived at Burton, apparently early in the eleventh century, a wandering Irishman named Conchubran who was collecting materials to improve the Life of St. Monenna, abbess of Killeavy near Drogheda.¹⁸ The native Life was already one of the most splendid products of Irish hagiography and is in places very funny indeed. However, it included the story how Monenna and her maidens crossed over to Britain on a floating island; and Conchubran seems to have come to find out what kind of impression they had made when they arrived. Having discovered some Scottish saint with a similar name, he duly annexed to his patroness' credit the churches she had founded; and, moving southwards, reached Burton where he decided their St. Modwenna and his St. Monenna must be the same. This, of course, landed him with three sets of relics. At the Irish end the difficulty was slight since Killeavy, characteristically, exhibited its foundress' cowl and pastoral staff but knew nothing about her bones. To deal with the Scottish and English bodies was harder; but Conchubran devised a wonderful scene where, after a squabble between the English and Scottish disciples of the newly dead saint as to who shall retain her corpse, St. Columba is called in. He orders four Englishmen, facing one way, to pick up one end of the coffin and four Scotsmen, facing the other way, the other. At the word "go" the two parties step smartly forward and march out of two different doors of the church each carrying a separate coffin. It is scarcely necessary to labour the point that the man who thought up that story is not a dependable historical source; but his Celtic inventions were naturally of far greater popular appeal than jejeune English facts.

The nunnery at Polesworth in Warwickshire was founded, according to Matthew Paris,¹⁹ who had got hold of some unromantic early source, by Edith, sister of King Athelstan, after her marriage in 925 to Sihtric, the Danish King of York. She died on a 15th July.²⁰ The religious establishment at Tamworth was founded, according to Goscelin of St. Bertin writing in the mid-eleventh century,²¹ by Edith, sister of King Edgar, presumably some thirty or forty years later. Had Conchubran been interested in facts he could, no doubt, have discovered these. Intent, however, on the glory of his Modwenna/Monenna he introduces into his story the sister of an Alfred King of the English called Ite (or occasionally Ede) who, under Modwenna's direction, sets up a

nunnery in the Forest of Arderne. She is clearly meant to be St. Edith of Polesworth; and the spelling suggests that the Irishman was using an oral source. "Alfred" is probably a reminiscence of Alchfrid, under-king of Deira at the end of the seventh century, who is known to have visited Ireland. St. Modwenna is also provided with a maiden named Osid, who appears on the scene suddenly, and whose parentage and origins are not discussed. She is attached to Ite, and her only function is to be sent by Ite to Modwenna with a book she wants to show her, fall into the river Anker *en route*, and be resurrected by St. Modwenna three days later, still clasping the undamaged manuscript. It can be taken pretty well for granted that St. Modwenna was not a protagonist in this story before Conchubran got hold of it. But "Ite" and "Osid", notably the latter, are primarily introduced into his narrative as part of it and it must have been related about them before it reached Conchubran's ears. This is obviously the story of which Leland, following de Vere, gives us the setting; and I think it is clear that its source is the legend of St. Edburga whom Conchubran has replaced by St. Modwenna as nonchalantly as he has replaced the Cherwell by the Anker.²²

The next document we have is the Life of St. Osyth in Anglo-Norman verse. It is discussed by its editor as if deriving from the earliest Essex Life. This, for various reasons, is certainly incorrect. Most of it is taken from de Vere. We have again his statement that Osyth was born at Quarrendon and the further information that the local rustics know the precise spot because from that day to this no grass has grown on it and it has thus remained holy, being unable to be put to base agricultural use. The implied argument would carry little weight today, but it may well be that the site of King Fredeswald's palace was known

The poem, however, then has Osyth entrusted, not to her aunt Edith, but to St. Modwenna. It is noteworthy that its editor should have established philologically that the whole ensuing Modwenna episode is distinct in language and versification from the rest, and later by at least fifty years. In its original form the poem presumably continued to follow de Vere, and the protagonist was Edburga. As we now have it, it follows for this section Geoffrey Abbot of Burton (1114-1151) who tidied up Conchubran's chaotic narrative of which he had procured a copy from Ireland, and provided the standard form in which St. Modwenna's Life circulated in the later Middle Ages. The Life of St. Osyth in the *Nova Legenda Anglie*, my "Second Essex Life", actually lifts the whole section verbatim from Geoffrey.

For the Essex part of Osyth's career the poem reverts to de Vere; but it omits all mention of a transference of the saint's relics to or from Aylesbury. The Second Essex Life, while accepting that they had for some time been there, has a circumstantial story, manifestly invented, of how they came to be brought back.

It seems certain enough that a spot in Aylesbury church must at all dates have been pointed out as St. Osyth's grave. There must have been some focus for the Buckinghamshire devotion and the Buckinghamshire miracles: and de Vere's comments, so far as Leland has preserved them, appear merely to mean that he was convinced *a priori* that the grave was empty. Soon after 1500, however, the Vicar of Aylesbury took the bold step of excavating the tomb

and exposing the human remains he discovered to veneration. He was a northerner, named Robert Harom, with a Cambridge M.A., having graduated in 1476, and he had been inducted in 1500/1.²³ The reaction to his enterprising move was not slow in coming. The Translation had been performed without due enquiry as to the authenticity of the relics or official permission. Archbishop Henry Deane,²⁴ at one of the sessions of his provincial council at St. Paul's, London, in 1502, no doubt stimulated by the protests of the bishop of London and the abbot of Chich, sent a mandate to the bishop of Lincoln's chancellor²⁵ to put a stop to the cult. The remains of St. Osyth were known to be at Chich; the Translation there had been solemnly performed in the presence of numerous church dignitaries centuries ago and was official. The Vicar of Aylesbury had been guilty of a shameless deception whose purpose was to induce the faithful to make offerings which would go into his pocket. He was therefore to be suitably punished and the cult prohibited.

A similar explosion had followed the first attempt to elevate the relics of Master John Shorne;²⁶ but in his case there was no rival body, and veneration was evidently allowed to continue. In the case of St. Osyth, however, the elevation was in direct conflict with the well-established claims of Chich and although I have not yet found further record of the case, it can be taken as certain that the shrine was dismantled.

But was the Vicar guilty, in fact, of shameless fraud? The answer to this question really depends on whether two abbesses called Osyth are involved or only one. The Essex legend is a thoroughly "bad" one. In its developed form it makes the foundress of Chich a virgin, although it is certain king Sighere had a son, and has her murdered by Hingvar and Ubba (the ninth-century villains of the Legend of St. Edmund of East Anglia), although it claims she entered her nunnery two centuries before these vikings were first sighted off the English coast. The First Essex Life is admittedly very cautious (except that it allows two bishops to veil a queen against the wishes of her husband, contrary to Canon Law). It does not name the pirates, and, although the genealogical preamble implies a non-Essex source, it avoids any reference to Buckinghamshire or Oxfordshire; but its author cannot escape having to record the preposterous Essex legends of the supernatural stag, and of the saint carrying her head after death. The later versions are compelled to admit that St. Osyth's body had at some time at any rate rested at Aylesbury; but they are embarrassed to explain how and when it was brought there or taken away. The singularly unconvincing "translations" of the body can at least be disposed of if we allow that there were two Osyths, one the granddaughter of Penda and second abbess of Aylesbury, the other king Sighere's queen and foundress of Chich. The name was not rare; there are four among the Queen Abbesses in the Durham Liber Vitae. The identification of the two Osyths with one another would then be due to each having associated legends which the guardians of the other's body wished to appropriate. To Chich, Aylesbury could offer distinguished ancestry and (although it reflected no credit on Osyth) the touching story of the two distraught abbesses going out to look for the missing girl and meeting on the bridge across the river into which she had fallen. To Aylesbury, Chich could offer a royal marriage and a cephalophoric martyrdom.

Such temptations were rarely resisted. Both Polesworth and Tamworth seized on Conchubran's present of the story of the drowned Osyth, although this meant identifying their tenth-century foundresses with one another²⁷ and pushing them back into the seventh (or ninth) century, and involved their inextricable confusion with a third Edith, of Aylesbury. In the absence of dependable documents earlier than the confusion, the only thing that can show that such figures were originally distinct, once their legends have been confounded, is their retention of different feast-days. The surplus ones are usually then rationalised as the anniversaries of Translations. Apart from St. Edith of Wilton, who is quite distinct, the only Edith whose feast-day is known is the foundress of Polesworth; but, fortunately, for each of the three Ediths we have a source independent of Conchubran. For St. Osyth of Aylesbury we have no uncontaminated source, but there is a mysterious feast of St. Osyth on 3rd June. This has been noticed in two calendars from St. Albans and two calendars from Oxford, in all of which the usual feast on 7th October is wanting, and the saint is described as virgin but not martyr. The same feast is found added to the calendars of St. Neots (Hunts.) and St. Mary Overy, Southwark (which have 7th October in the original hand), and, less satisfactorily, appears, as a Translation, in a calendar of Chich which has the October feast, with octave, as well.²⁸ The last must, however, be interpreted as meaning that Chich had accepted the Aylesbury feast as well as its own when, in the Second Essex Life, it was engaged in harmonising the Essex and Buckinghamshire stories. The books where 3rd June is the only feast of St. Osyth are those whose home lies nearest to Aylesbury, while the addition in the St. Mary Overy calendar is likely to relate to the ownership by this house of the church of Wendover. Moreover, in view of the evidence of the St. Alban's calendars, the entry in the Annals of Dunstable under the year 636; *Sancta Ositha monialis deo dedicatur* must refer to the Aylesbury saint and not to the Essex queen. The distribution of calendars with the feast on 3rd June is in any case incompatible with an Essex origin for the commemoration. The matter is clinched by our knowledge that before 1239 the only annual fair in Aylesbury was (and had long been) held on the feast of St. Osyth "in summer".²⁹ The document telling us this, the grant by Henry III of a further, four-day, fair starting on "the" day of St. Osyth is printed below. It is curious that the Charter Roll entry originally read "the day of St. Osyth's Translation", the last word having been deleted. It is tempting to suppose that this was the Aylesbury view of what was commemorated on 7th October, and that the "error" was removed by some Chancery clerk who knew the "facts" as understood in the diocese of London. The date of the main Buckinghamshire feast can similarly be established from the charter Campbell X. i. in the British Museum, which is printed below since it is little known and interesting among other things as one of the few records of the abbey of Medmenham. It is dated Sunday the feast of St. Osyth in the twelfth year of Edward II (which ran from 8th July, 1318, to 7th July, 1319). In 1318, 7th October was a Saturday; but in 1319, 3rd June was a Sunday—actually Trinity Sunday, yet St. Osyth takes precedence. It is thus clear that the festivals, and therefore the persons, of St. Osyth of Aylesbury and St. Osyth of Chich, are distinct. The Rev. Robert Harom was

practising no fraud; he was trying to right an ancient wrong. I hope the experiment, while it lasted, was profitable to him.

APPENDIX

A. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, ms. 170, p. 109, printed by kind permission of the Master and Fellows.

Henricus permissione divina etc. dilecto nobis in Christo percelebri viro magistro Karolo Bouthe legum doctore venerabilis fratris nostri W(illelmi) eadem permissione divina Lincolniensis Episcopi Cancellario, salutem gratiam et nostram benedictionem.

Gloriosus in electis suis et in singulis semper admirabilis deus, qui sanctorum sanctorumque merita et labores attendens; eis in tempore prout sua divina disposizione statuit coronam glorie, quam promisit dare dignatus est ac de ipsorum glorificatione congaudens; non sinit eorum memoriam per longeva temporum curricula delitescere; Sed non Immerito. prout pro sui gloriosi sacrique nominis honorificentia et uniuersalis sue Ecclesie Illustratione et dedicatione; dignissimam virginem et martirem sanctam Ositham sanctorum Cathologo ascribere. et tanta gracia sublimare fecit, ut in perpetuas eternitates inter sanctorum agmina mereretur collocari. Cuius sancte Reliquie in terris in loco scilicet conuenienti decentique Tumulo in Conuentuali Ecclesia monasterii sub vocabulo ipsius sancte Osithe in diocesi Londoniensi, ad dei laudem honorifice ac sumptuose fundati, per ministerium Translacionis ut decet recondite sunt. Ubi fideles Christi, cum omni debita reuerencia, omnique honore ad illius Tumulum sacrum conuenientes, precibus et oracionibus instare solent apud Altissimum; qui eis dat consueta sanitatis remedia. ipsius gloriose virginis Intercessionibus; et postremo vitam eternam feliciter promereri. Nichilominus quia inchoato iam pridem sacro nostro prouinciali concilio generali et eo hodie pendente indeciso; nobis et eidem consilio presentatum ac fideli testimonio extitit insinuatum. Quod modernus vicarius prebendalis siue parrochialis ecclesie de Aylesbury Lincolniensis Diocesis quo nescitur spiritu ductus ymmo verius seductus; sua temeritate propria et absque omni licencia et approbacione ecclesie Quoddam corpus Ymmo Cadauer humanum. in ipsa prebende ecclesia per tempora immemorata humatum, quod sacrum corpus. et reliquias predictae sancte Osithe diabolica mente ac simulata et erronea fide predicat et solum hoc suo verbo absque omni requisito superinde facto testimonio ecclesie sancte; attestare non veretur; nuper fecit exhumare et in loco publico reponere. ubi sub modo et cultu sacrilego. ad illud venerandum, tanquam ad simulacrum gencium. fieri solet hiis diebus concursus populorum. Ac ipse vicarius suis oblectamentis et persuasionibus dampnatis populum concitat, atque inducit quin verius seducit, suas oblaciones sub deuocionis piaculo, facere; tamen vendicans sibi ad eius turpe lucrum, quecumque inibi oblata, absque auctoritate ecclesie super hoc prius requisita. Et ne populus in hoc tante (erroris) malo quod absit diucius perseueret ac vicarius ille propter hoc (suum) facinus remaneat impunitus, ad descendendum igitur ad locum predictum ac super premissis (et eorum veritate) debite inquirendum, et si ea per inquisitionem huiusmodi veritati inniti inueneritis. contra eundem vicarium in ea parte iuxta Juris exigenciam procedendum etc.

B. Charter Roll 23, H.3., m.3.

Pro Johanne filio Galfridi

Rex Archiepiscopis etc. salutem. Sciatis nos concessisse et hac carta nostra confirmasse pro nobis et heredibus nostris dilecto et fideli nostro Johanni filio Galfridi quod ipse et heredes sui habeant imperpetuum unam feriam singulis annis apud Manerium suum de Aylesbyr' duraturam per quatuor dies videlicet in die (Trans-

lacionis³⁰) sancte Oside et per tres dies sequentes. Nisi etc. Iter tamen quod ipse et heredes sui habeant singulis annis antiquam feriam que prius ibi teneri consuevit in festo sancte Oside in Estate. Quare etc. Testibus S. de Monteforti Comite Leicestrie. P. de Malo Lacu. S. de Segrave. V. de cryoyl. A. de sancto Amando. S. de Pless'. Drogone de Barentino Thoma de Albo Monasterio. et aliis.

Dat' per manum nostram apud Westmonasterium xxx die maij Anno regni nostri xxij.³¹

C. British Museum, Campbell charter X, 8.

Omnibus et singulis tenentibus nostris de Darneden³²; domine Priorisse de Merlawe,³³ Johanni filio Roberti filii Walteri de Cyppenham, et Thome Lambert de Bekeneffeld, Simoni Saluage de eadem, Martino filio Rogeri Chapman de eadem, Waltero Boyvile de eadem, Roberto atte Hethe de eadem, Ricardo atte Hokweye juniore, et Ade Schrapie de Burnham, et Roberto Thomas de Dorne, Galfridus permissione divina Abbas de Medmenham et eiusdem loci Conuentus salutem in domino sempiternam.

Noveritis nos tradidisse concessisse et confirmasse domino Radulfo de Wedon militi³⁴ omnes terras et tenementa nostra cum redditibus et serviciis omnium tenentium nostrorum et cum omnibus aliis pertinentiis in Darnedene. Quare vobis supplicamus et per presentes assignamus quod amodo predicto Radulfo heredibus assignatis seu executoribus suis de omnibus redditibus et serviciis cuilibet vestrum singillatim contingentibus iuxta tenorem indenture inter nos inde confecte sitis intendentes et respondentes. In cuius rei testimonium sigillum nostrum commune presentibus est appensum.

Data apud Bekeneffeld die dominica in festo sancte Osithe virginis Anno regni Regis Edwardi filii Regis Edwardi duodecimo.

Lower part of deed with seal tag trimmed off.

¹ The obvious sources are abbreviated as follows: AA.SS. = *Acta Sanctorum* (Antwerp/Brussels 1643, still in progress, arranged by months and days). NLA = *Nova Legenda Anglie* (London 1516, reprinted and annotated by Horstmann, Oxford, 1910, arranged alphabetically). Mon = Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, 2nd ed., 6 vols, London, 1817. V.C.H. = *Victoria County History*. AB = *Analecta Bollandiana*. RS. = *Rolls Series (Scriptores Rerum Britannicarum)*. HBS = *Henry Bradshaw Society*.

² For S. Rumwold (3 Nov.), see AA.SS. and *Northamptonshire, Past and Present*, vol. III (1963). For Master John Shorne, see *Records of Bucks.*, vol. XV, p. 299 (in the 9th verse of the sequence, read *dum* for *diuini*) and Thompson, A. H.: *The English Clergy* (1947) p. 238.

³ *The Chronicle of Hugh Candidus*, ed. Mellows, W. T. (1949), p. 63.

⁴ Liebermann, F.: *Die Heiligen Englands* (Hanover, 1889), p. 15.

⁵ *VCH Bucks.*, I, p. 224.

⁶ Mon. VI, 309.

⁷ The known lives of St. Osyth are as follows:

(1) The First Essex Life; in British Museum ms. Lansdowne 436 and the Codex Gothanus (see AB, LVIII (1940)).

(2) The Life by William de Vere: excerpts in Leland, *Itinerarium*, ed. Hearne, T., vol. VIII f, 796 ff, and cf. vol. IV, f 192, and the *Hereford Breviary*, ed. Frere, W. H., and Brown, L. E. G., vol. II (HBS, vol. XL, 1911), p. 362.

(3) The Anglo-Norman verse Life, ed Baker, A. T., in *Modern Language Review*, vol. VI (1911).

(4) Breviary Lessons from Bury St. Edmunds in Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Bodl, 240, p. 588.

(5) The Second Essex Life, epitomised in NLA fol. CCXLV.

⁸ Fredeswald seems to be an error for Fredewald which, like Wilburga, is an attested Anglo-Saxon name.

⁹ See the Mercian pedigree in Florence of Worcester (ed. Thorpe, B., 1848, vol. I, p. 252.)

¹⁰ Felix: *Life of St. Guthlac*, ed. Colgrave, B., p. 84, and note.

¹¹ *Op. cit.* p. 62.

¹² *Liber Vitae Ecclesiae Dunelmensis*, ed. Stevenson (*Surtees Soc.*, vol. 13), 1841, p. 4 ff.

¹³ The best known S. Edburga was a daughter of king Edward the Elder, nun at Winchester, who died in 953 according to the *Annals of Worcester* (RS). According to her legend (Lansdowne 436, not in NLA), 15th June was her anniversary while 18th July was her Translation (i.e., Elevation): it also says some of her relics were acquired for Pershore on its foundation, but I know no Pershore calendar. The June feast is common; both feasts are standard in Winchester calendars and are in St. Paul's Cathedral, London, ms. 38c. 19. The latter has, however, for the second feast on 18th July the mysterious entry: Eadburge virginis. Ositha. and Clare College, Cambridge, ms. Kk iij. 6 (a very puzzling calendar) has 18th July as the saint's only feast. A second S. Edburga was abbess of Minster in Thanet in the seventh century, with her feast on 13th December (NLA). The Resting Places (Liebertmann *op. cit.*) name a third, with relics at Southwell; she is alleged, I do not know on what authority, to have been abbess of Repton, but her anniversary seems unknown. The S. Edburga of whom Bicester Priory undoubtedly claimed to have the relics is said (VCH Oxon., VI, p. 32) to have had her feast on 18th July. There is no certain liturgical evidence for this, and the indirect evidence (for the date of Bicester market) is not given. If the date is right, the London and Clare College calendars presumably refer to this S. Edburga; and either her day was borrowed from the Winchester calendar or Winchester (at an improbably early date) deliberately arranged a translation on her day. The psalter British Museum Harley 2844 was made for a nunnery dedicated to S. Mary, S. Nicholas and All Saints: St. Edburga heads the series of virgins invoked in the litany and the only other localised female saint is Frideswide. Under the circumstances, the dedication should mean Littlemore (though I do not know that Studley is impossible) but St. Edburga must be as of Bicester. Unfortunately the calendar, which does not seem part of the original book, is undistinctive and includes no Edburga.

One or other of these saints was of particular interest to the owners of Ms. A. of the Sarum Missal (ed. Wickham-Legg, J., Oxford, 1916, p. 527) and of the famous Worcester polyphonic ms. (*Worcester Fragments*, ed. Dittmer, L., 1957, p. 19) but I do not think either book can reasonably be claimed for Bicester.

¹⁴ Adderbury is a corruption of Edburga's Burgh. Leland seems to have thought the reference was to Ellesborough but neither philologically nor otherwise is this acceptable.

¹⁵ St. Rumwold's mother is also said to have been a daughter of Penda. While the implication that all the minsters (in St. Rumwold's case, King's Sutton) associated with otherwise unknown daughters of Penda were endowed by the Mercian royal family at an early period during the conversion of Mercia is likely to be correct, it is difficult to believe that the genealogical information is in every case correct in detail.

¹⁶ I have rendered the *stadia* used by Leland, presumably quoting his source, as "leagues", which is right for Adderbury. The natural rendering "furlongs" seems impossible, while Leland, since he had Ellesborough in mind, must himself have understood the word as meaning "miles".

¹⁷ Mon. III, 32.

¹⁸ The known Lives of SS. Monenna and Modwenna are:

(1) The Life of St. Darerca alias Moninna in the *Codex Salmanticensis*, ed. as *Acta SS. Hiberniae* by de Smedt, C., and Backer, J. (1887), col. 165, and ed. as *Vitae SS. Hiberniae* by Heist. W. W. (1965), p. 83.

(2) Conchubran's conflated Life, ed. Esposito, M., in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 1910.

(3) The Life by abbot Geoffrey of Burton: unpublished, epitome in NLA.

(4) The Anglo-Norman versified form of the last, ed. Baker, A. T., and Bell, A. (*Anglo Norman Text Society*, vol. VII, 1947).

There is a great deal of purely Irish additional material in Conchubran as compared with the *Salmanticensis* version, and Esposito (in *English Historical Review*, XXXV, p. 71) assigns most of it to a lost very early Irish Life of which the *Salmanticensis* would be an epitome. It is to this Irish material as a whole, not to the *Salmanticensis* itself, that I refer in the text as the Irish Life. Some of it was no doubt added by Conchubran.

¹⁹ Matthew Paris: *Chronica Majora*, ed. Luard (R. S., vol. I, p. 446).

²⁰ Her feast, given by Matthew Paris, is found in Calendars of Dublin Cathedral, in that of the well-known West of England commonplace book Oxford Bodleian ms. Digby 86 and as an addition in the London calendar, pub. Eeles in *Trans. Essex Archaeological Society*, vol. 25 (1955/60), p. 75 ff.

²¹ See Goscelini *Vita S. Edithae (Wiltoniensis) versio prior*, ed. Wilmar, AB, LVI (1938), p. 53.

²² This reconstruction of the sequence of events depends on various presuppositions, notably that the First Essex Life of St. Osyth, as we have it, is complete. The Bury Lessons, however, reflect in the prologue, and in the course of the narrative, the First Essex Life so exactly and with such frequent verbal echoes that they must in some sense derive from it; they are better written and it cannot derive from them. But they include extra precisions, e.g. the date (1076) of the first Translation at Chich and the survival of the mark of Osyth's blood-stained hands on the church door for

450 years (till 1103, then, when the church was presumably rebuilt); and these are unlikely to have originated anywhere but Chich or after de Vere. The Lessons also include the Modwenna episode in a form which is, in detail, unique, and call the protagonist Modwen without inflexion, against all other Latin Lives. It is, therefore, quite possible that our text of the First Essex Life, though backed by two mss. and an epitome, is itself an epitome of a lost longer Life, already including the Modwenna episode, and more completely represented by the Lessons. One would then have to suppose that de Vere, "corrected" the Modwenna episode in the light of traditions current in Aylesbury. I should still maintain that the story was told of St. Edburga before it was told of St. Modwenna on the strength of the mention of Edburga in the prologue and the absence of any other tradition or probability associating Osyth with Warwickshire. But the case would be much less clear.

²³ Emden, A. B., *Register of Graduates of Cambridge* to 1500.

²⁴ Deane's Register is mostly lost, but a number of his official letters were copied into the formulary of John Colles (Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, ms. 170) where that printed in the appendix to this paper is item 63.

²⁵ This was Charles Booth, subsequently bishop of Hereford, commissary-general for William Smith, bishop of Lincoln, and acting for his bishop in his absence.

²⁶ Thompson, A. H., *loc. cit.*, n. 2 above.

²⁷ This is still assuming that the patronesses of Polesworth and Tamworth actually were distinct. The position is that the earlier Resting Places only has one Edith, resting at Polesworth, and Hugh Candidus also only one, resting at Tamworth. The 15th/16th English legend printed by Dugdale (Mon II, p. 362), while clearly not very reliable, says that Polesworth was suppressed by the lord of Tamworth at the Conquest, and (if there is any truth in this) he may have moved the relics. A minster existed at Tamworth c. 1000 since it is mentioned in Wulfic Spot's will (Mon III, p. 37) but Goscelin gives the only direct information about who founded it: and as he later dropped the passage (and John of Tynemouth's version of the earlier of Goscelin's two Lives of St. Edith, printed in NLA, substitutes Polesworth for Tamworth) he may have realised he had made a mistake, or that the matter was complicated. Matthew Paris and John of Tynemouth differ as to whether the foundress of Polesworth was king Edmund's sister or daughter, a point on which tradition could easily have become confused. But neither is influenced by Geoffrey of Burton's rationalisation of Conchubran, whereby she became daughter of king Ethelwulf and sister of Alfred the Great, though John in his epitome of Geoffrey's Life of St. Modwenna actually copied this statement down. Moreover though the Tamworth mass for St. Edith (Trinity College, Oxford, ms. 8, f. 288 verso) includes a sequence (*Analecta Humnica*, ed. Dreves, and others, vol. XL, p. 170) showing that the canons thought their patroness identical with Conchubran's "Ite", it does not claim her as foundress. There is, therefore, a good chance that St. Edith "of Tamworth" is the same, tenth-century, personage as St. Edith of Polesworth.

²⁸ The Oxford calendars are those of the Chancellor of the University (*Munimenta Academica*, ed. Anstey, 1868, RS) and in Trinity College, Cambridge, ms. 0, IV, 16; the St. Alban's ones are in Bodleian Laud Misc. 279 and British Museum Cotton Julius D. VII: St. Neot's is in Lambeth Palace 563, St. Mary Overy in British Museum Cotton Faustina A VIII and Chich in B. M. Sloane 1935. For St. Alban's and St. Neot's, see Wormald, F.: *English Benedictine Calendars after 1100* (H.B.S. vols. LXXVII and LXXXI). Of the other presumed Chich calendars, Bodleian ms. Laud, Misc. 240 (twelfth century) which has only the October feast, is doubtfully from Chich, and Oxford, Trinity College, G 82 lacks June. The feast on 3rd June appears as *Eodem die sancte Osithe virginis* in the related Altemps and Norwich martyrologies (the latter British Museum Cotton Julius B VII), whereas the Osyth of 7th October is in each case martyr as well as virgin.

²⁹ See *V.C.H. Bucks*, III, 6, to which I owe the reference.

³⁰ Struck out in ms.

³¹ = 30th May 1239.

³² In Beaconsfield.

³³ i.e. Little Marlow nunnery.

³⁴ Of Wedon Hill in Amersham and a large-scale land owner elsewhere in the county.