

Deerhurst,
St Werstan
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Mythmaking in
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by Heather Gilderdale Scott

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Deerhurst is best known for the magnificence of the priory church's Anglo-Saxon remains, and for the importance of the site in England's pre-Conquest history. But Deerhurst's later history also deserves consideration.¹ Examined here is one particular aspect of that history: the church and community's role in what appears to have been a sophisticated piece of late medieval history writing or 'mythmaking'. Apparently constructed at some point in the fifteenth century by the monastic community at Great Malvern Priory, the story tells of one St Werstan, linking the two houses, and utilising the past to sanctify the present.

The Legend of St Werstan: Fact or Fiction?

Great Malvern Priory (Fig. 1) was founded, as a Benedictine house, in the year 1085; but as its current appearance shows, over the course of the fifteenth



Fig. 1 Great Malvern Priory (Worcs.), from the north. Photo by W. Mendelssohn (from the Conway Library)



*Fig. 2 The Foundation Window, Great Malvern Priory: lower half, telling of the foundation of the priory.
Photo by David O'Connor*

century the monastery was extensively rebuilt in a fashionable Perpendicular style. Much of the artistic and decorative work inside the church associated with this reconstruction campaign has been lost. There are no wall paintings or substantial sculptural remains, for example. Yet the church's stained glass has survived remarkably well. Collectively constituting the country's most complete extant fifteenth-century glazing scheme, the glass also provides an exceptional artistic insight into the thoughts, beliefs and wishes of a medieval English monastic community. The scheme's riches are manifold, but arguably amongst the most significant is a remarkable window set high above the choir stalls at the heart of the monastic church.² The bottom row of lights (Fig. 2) tells the relatively well-documented story of the foundation and early history of the priory. According to William of Malmesbury, the monastery was founded by a monk named Aldwin, who had been living as a hermit in the Malvern Hills but was persuaded by Bishop Wulfstan (*c.*1008–1095) of Worcester to found a monastery there instead.³ In the far left light of the window are shown both these figures. Wulfstan, as the saint he would later become, hands over a sealed charter, probably representing gifts of land to the new monastery, to a kneeling figure labelled Aldwin. In the three subsequent lights other historical benefactors to the priory are depicted. Next to Wulfstan stands William the Conqueror, handing another sealed charter to Aldwin, reflecting the numerous confirmations of previous grants that the king made.⁴ Next are recorded donations by various Norman aristocrats, identified by the scrolls above their heads as Bernard, earl of Hereford, William, earl of Gloucester, and Osbern Fitzpons, whose various gifts to Malvern are known to have included a fishery on the river Severn.⁵

Above these scenes, the glass in the upper half of the window tells another story – a lesser-known story of a religious community with saintly associations at Malvern pre-dating the foundation of Aldwin's monastery. This account (Fig. 3) begins with an image of a figure, kneeling in prayer at a desk set amidst a foliage-covered hill-scape, labelled 'St Werstan the martyr'. Above Werstan is a vision, come to him in the course of his devotions: four angels mark the corners of a plot on which there lies a large key between four flowering plants. In the following scene, a small chapel apparently built on the site revealed to Werstan is shown in the process of consecration by a further four angels, as Werstan kneels in thanks in front of the church. Next, the successful establishment of Werstan's foundation continues, with its needs apparently brought to the attention of Edward the Confessor, who hands over his own charter to a cleric. In the window's final scene, Werstan's good fortune, and his community, come to a grisly end. Werstan is slain in his chapel whilst other figures visit another building on the site in which his community is gathered. Armed with bundles of sticks, they perhaps plan to thrash the religious figures, or set the church and other buildings on the site alight.

Yet what has this to do with Deerhurst? The Tudor scholar, John Leland (*c.*1503–1552) provides the link. Sometimes termed 'the father of English local history',



*Fig. 3 The Foundation Window, Great Malvern Priory: upper half, telling of the pre-Benedictine history of the site.
Photo by David O'Connor*

Leland's antiquarian activities included a comprehensive tour of the religious houses of England, consulting both their libraries and their communities, accessing a body of knowledge that would be scattered just a few years later at the Dissolution. In his records of England's antiquities, Leland alludes to the story of St Werstan twice. In reference to Malvern itself, he notes (in translation) 'a chapel ... close to the priory, where St Werstan was martyred'.⁶ Elsewhere, he provides a detail not found in the stained glass narrative. His account of Deerhurst Priory includes the note that 'It [Deerhurst] was destroyed by the Danes. Werstanus fledde thens, as it is seyde, to Malverne'.⁷

The story of St Werstan has, unsurprisingly, attracted some scholarly attention, with questions of the narrative's historical veracity, and of further evidence for Werstan, most commonly asked.⁸ Certainly, a relatively coherent and convincing narrative can be pieced together using established historical events to contextualise the information provided by Leland and the stained glass, potentially suggesting for the narrative a date in the 1050s. It seems clear, for example, that a religious 'community' of some nature existed at Malvern before the Benedictine house was founded in 1085. As we have already seen, Malmesbury described Aldwin as living amongst the Malvern Hills when instructed by Wulfstan to establish a Benedictine house there; he also referenced the presence of a fellow hermit, Guy, perhaps indicating a broader religious presence at the site.⁹

Equally, the gift of property to a pre-Conquest community at Malvern by Edward the Confessor, and therefore dating to his reign between 1042 and 1066, is well attested. No record of the original grant survives, but in the early twelfth century Henry I confirmed Malvern's possession of lands described as having been given by the Confessor.¹⁰ It is known, furthermore, that King Edward often held his court at Gloucester, less than twenty miles from Malvern, in the 1040s and 1050s; and it has been suggested that he may have then been made aware of the new religious settlement, and have endowed it with land out of the royal domain at Malvern.¹¹ Indeed, the Confessor's known love of, and association with, hunting may have led him personally to Malvern Chase.¹²

It is also possible, taking another element of the story, that armed invaders prepared to kill members of the religious communities they encountered (as shown in the stained glass narrative) may have reached Malvern around the time that Werstan was apparently murdered. From the late 1040s a series of invasions in the region are recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. In the summer of 1049, for example, an Irish fleet sailed up the river Severn to join forces with the Welsh king Gruffudd ap Rhydderch of Dyfed, and, the chronicle notes, 'did damage in those parts'.¹³ Given it was Ealdred, the bishop of Worcester, who drove off the invaders, it is not impossible that their 'damage' may have extended into the Malvern Hills. Three years later, another Welsh king, Gruffudd ap Llywelyn of Gwynedd, also made an attack, plundering 'quite close to Leominster'.¹⁴ This was followed in October 1055 by the most serious invasion, when Gruffudd ap Llywelyn, supported by the Irish, took Hereford by force, plundering the

cathedral of its relics and treasures, killing some of the priests, and destroying the building by fire.¹⁵ The following year, the Welsh killed the new bishop of Hereford, and members of his priesthood, as they went on campaign against Gruffudd ap Llywelyn.¹⁶ It is possible that a community at Malvern might also have come within the range of such attacks, and suffered a similar fate to that at Hereford.

Furthermore, the name Werstan itself is, at the least, appropriate to the story. Authentically Anglo-Saxon – it was the name of an early tenth-century bishop of Sherborne – it was also used in the period by individuals in the western midlands. In the mid tenth century, for example, the name appears among the lists of witnesses attached to two grants of land by King Edgar, in Herefordshire and Shropshire; the only occurrence of the name in Domesday Book is also found in Herefordshire. A handful of mid-tenth-century coins, one perhaps minted at Chester, is known with Werstan as the moneyer's name.¹⁷

However, despite this circumstantial evidence for the narrative as presented at Malvern and in Leland, there are problems with the Werstan story. The Deerhurst element is hard to pin down, historically and chronologically. Leland arguably implies that Werstan left Deerhurst as a result of its destruction by the Danes.¹⁸ It is possible that Deerhurst might have suffered a Danish attack as late as 1016, shortly before Edmund Ironside and King Cnut of Denmark met at Olney, just outside Deerhurst, to make peace and divide England between them. If this was the case, it is perhaps possible that Werstan then fled and lived in peace, gathering a community in the Malvern Hills until his death some thirty-five or forty years later at the hands of the Welsh or Irish. Yet this interpretation raises questions about how a community survived between 1016 and Edward the Confessor's donation between the early 1040s and 1066.

It has also been argued most recently that the architectural and art-historical evidence at Deerhurst suggests that the major part of the building survives from a period before the Danish invasions.¹⁹ What, then, might have driven a figure such as Werstan away from the priory in the eleventh century? There are certainly possibilities.²⁰ It has been suggested that 'fervour and zeal probably languished at Deerhurst as in many other Benedictine houses in the first half of the eleventh century', and that Werstan fled 'to escape, not from the Danes, but from no less dangerous foes to the monastic life – the laxity and demoralization of a decaying community'.²¹ The solitude and asceticism of the hermitical life was also, in itself, evidently fashionable in England in the period, perhaps no more so than within the diocese of Worcester, within which both Deerhurst and Malvern lay.²² The problem, however, is that there is no direct evidence linking these general possibilities to Deerhurst specifically.

Furthermore, and perhaps most problematic in assessing the historical veracity of the St Werstan story is that, beyond Leland's references and the window at Malvern, there is no known extant evidence for Werstan's existence. He appears in no calendar of saints or list of relics. His life does not number amongst the

lives of the saints produced almost continually in England from the middle of the eleventh century onwards, either singly or within the extant collections of *vitae*. Admittedly, the destruction of enormous quantities of monastic records at the Dissolution created significant gaps in material that may have referred to Werstan. There are instances of English saints who seem to have enjoyed only very localised cults, or who are now known through just one or two references surviving by chance.²³ It has also been suggested that St Werstan may have been a casualty of the initial opposition to some Anglo-Saxon saints by the Normans, nipping his cult in the bud.²⁴

Even more difficult to explain than Werstan's hagiographical absence is that, until close to the end of the Middle Ages, even those sources addressing the question of Malvern's foundation and early history directly, and which must have been informed by the community at Great Malvern itself, make no mention of a St Werstan. Malmesbury, writing in the first half of the twelfth century, describing the events leading up to the foundation of the Benedictine house at Malvern in 1085 and apparently having met one prior of Malvern, clearly suggests that Aldwin, along with his companion Guy, were remembered as hermits, living in the 'wild woods of the Malvern Hills' who first occupied the site, and that the foundation of Aldwin's monastery marked the start of significant religious life at Malvern.²⁵ Elsewhere in his writings, Malmesbury again addressed the origins of religious life at Malvern. Describing the monasteries within Wulfstan's province, he pondered the name Malvern, terming it an antiphrasis, explaining that 'religion blossoms (*vernat*) there not badly (*male*), but well and beautifully, in a place where the shortage of mortal things draws the monks to feel a lively hope of advantage everlasting'.²⁶ It would surely have strengthened Malmesbury's case if he had been able to make reference to the sanctification of Malvern by a saint's martyrdom.

In the following century, a dispute between Great Malvern Priory and the bishop of Worcester over the latter's jurisdictional rights over the priory led to Malvern's origins and early history again being investigated. The account by Godfrey Giffard, then bishop, survives in his register for 1283; and although the account is manipulated in places to support Worcester's claims over Malvern, the story of a religious presence at Malvern again begins with a hermit named Aldwin, alive in the time of the Confessor.²⁷

Later still, in 1318, in the course of legal proceedings involving the monastery, the prior of Malvern himself put forward a version of the house's origins. The familiar story of a hermitage founded before the Conquest was recounted, although the hermit was, in this instance, identified not as Aldwin, but as Urse d'Abitot.²⁸ Given that Urse was among those who came to England with the Conqueror, this at first sight appears impossible, but it has tentatively been suggested that the two accounts can be reconciled. Domesday Book records that in Powick, not far from Malvern, there were eight freemen holding land in 1066, including two named as Alwinus and Alwi (names very close to Aldwin); the lands of four of these men (including Alwinus) were held in 1086 by Urse, the first post-Conquest sheriff of Worcester, with other Norman lords holding the

lands of the other four men. Perhaps one of these men took refuge in religious life and established a hermitage on land that now belonged to Urse.²⁹ At early fourteenth-century Malvern, the avoidance of direct reference to Aldwin may have served a political purpose. Malvern had eventually won its case against Worcester; its freedom from visitation by the bishop was confirmed, on the basis that Malvern was a daughter house of Westminster Abbey, and subject, therefore, to visitation by the abbot of Westminster alone. Nonetheless, the prior may not have wished, in 1318, to emphasise the role of Aldwin in Malvern's foundation, given that Aldwin had been charged with establishing a religious community there by Wulfstan, a bishop of Worcester.³⁰ Whatever the explanation for the use of Urse's name, the key point, for our purposes, is that even a prior of Malvern explaining the monastery's origins makes no mention of a St Werstan.

To summarise, therefore, the surviving evidence produced up until the early fourteenth century, it seems clear that, before the Norman Conquest, a hermit was living in the Malvern hills, close to the site of the priory. The hermit, almost universally named Aldwin, perhaps with a small community around him, received grants of land from Edward the Confessor, confirmed by William the Conqueror; these were then inherited by the later Benedictine monastery. There are also historical circumstances that might have seen foreign marauders in the hills around Malvern. There is, however, no extant evidence that a hermit was martyred, that his name was Werstan, or that he had any link with Deerhurst. Yet, when Malvern Priory was rebuilt and reglazed over the course of the 1400s, the martyred hermit saint Werstan was put very much centre stage.

The glass narrating Werstan's story was installed in a window at the religious heart of the monastic church. Located at the west end of the choir clerestory, close to the high altar that formed the focus of the monastery's religious life, and directly above the spot where the monastic stalls almost certainly stood, the window served to reinforce the idea that the fifteenth-century community was directly descended from a saintly ancestor. Iconographically, the St Werstan window was also presented as part of a scheme linking Great Malvern through time to the Passion of Christ itself.

The St Werstan story seems to have been emphasised in other ways at Malvern in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. In particular, a small chapel in the hills just above the priory was renovated and promoted by the community as the physical site of Werstan's martyrdom. Today, the structure is all but lost, a house having been built on the site and the area around it cleared to make a garden in the nineteenth century, but the chapel was recorded in picture form on eighteenth-century maps and engravings, and records made at the Dissolution note that the chapel had been bought by three local men.³¹ Prior to the Dissolution, the chapel was included in a scene of Malvern in one of the priory's windows painted around the year 1500. Unusually for Malvern, the window itself is now almost entirely lost, but early antiquarian descriptions describe the scene; they also show that the window was directly associated with the monastery's prior and sub-prior. The two men appeared

with their families in the foot of the window, emphasising that the chapel was an important part of the monastery's self-image in the late Middle Ages.³² Other evidence of the Malvern community's interest in the chapel comes in the form of the decorative tiles found in the house and garden built on the chapel site. No tiles from the chapel are known to survive, but in the early nineteenth century they were described as matching extant tiles, bearing dates in the 1450s, used in the monastery's fifteenth-century reconstruction programme to decorate the area around the high altar, and on the walls of the priory's gate house.³³ Given that there was a hermit in the Malvern hills before the Benedictine monastery was established, it is possible that there had long been a chapel close to the priory, perhaps dating back to the hermit himself. Yet it is interesting that, once again, the only datable evidence – in the form of the tiles – or documentary records of its existence, such as the Dissolution accounts, belong to the fifteenth century or later. In this period, the chapel was also explicitly associated with the St Werstan legend. When Leland visited the priory a decade or so before the Dissolution, the chapel close to the monastery was described to him as the spot where Werstan was martyred.³⁴

Foundation Myths in the Middle Ages and the St Werstan Narrative

The questions, therefore, at this point are two-fold. First, if the story of the martyr saint Werstan is largely a fiction, what purpose did it serve? Why did the Malvern brethren choose to present the foundation of a religious community on the site in such a way? Second, was there anything about the late Middle Ages, in particular, that might explain why the extant evidence for the Werstan story, including his connection with Deerhurst, dates from this period? Why was the story then promoted so heavily by the Malvern community?

To answer these questions, it should first be recognised that the creation of legends by monastic houses to explain the origins of their communities was by no means unusual in the Middle Ages. Antonia Gransden's work has emphasised the creativity of monastic authors in England in embellishing and embroidering the histories of their houses throughout the Middle Ages.³⁵ Particularly spectacular are the stories that developed around Glastonbury abbey, involving a cast of characters ranging from Saints Patrick, Bridget, David and Dunstan (at least some of whom almost certainly did spend time at or near the foundation) to twelve disciples of the Apostles, said to have come from Gaul in AD63 and to have built a church at Glastonbury on the bidding of the archangel Gabriel; Joseph of Arimathea was told to have brought a pair of cruets to the abbey, containing relics of the Holy Blood and the sweat of our Lord. King Arthur and Queen Guinevere also make an appearance – their relics said to have been found in the trunk of a hollowed oak, with Guinevere's flaxen hair turning to dust when it was touched, and Arthur's bones described as gigantic in size.³⁶

Less dramatic is the narrative of Tewkesbury abbey's foundation, as presented in the house's *Founders' Book*, telling of 'two great men truly noble, to wit, Oddo and Doddo' who 'founded in the year 715 a monastery to the glory of God

and the honour of the Virgin Mary ... in the place where a certain hermit called Theocus had made his abode, and therefore called Tewkesbury'.³⁷ Nonetheless, it too has been termed 'an intriguing melange of contemporary observation and pious fiction': the foundation date and hermit probably invented, but Odda, at least, a very real person. Indeed, it is clear that the Tewkesbury chronicle is concerned with the same Odda who founded a church at Deerhurst, now known as Odda's chapel, and that a foundation inscription at the chapel provided much material for the chronicle's account:³⁸ highlighting the creativity of monastic authors in the Middle Ages when considering the origins of their houses, as well as, for our purposes, bringing the point very close to home!

Essentially similar tales of royal and saintly connections, relics and miracles, mixing verifiable fact with legendary models, run throughout the surviving accounts of foundation and early history composed by monastic houses in medieval England.

Similar observations have also been made about the foundation legends of monastic communities elsewhere in medieval Europe.³⁹ They demonstrate collectively that, at one level, such legends have a context in what constituted 'history writing' in the Middle Ages. They belong to a range or spectrum of records and sources – spanning charters and legal documents at one end, and more overtly literary creations, such as romances, at the other – each of which engaged with the past, and mixed historical fact with speculation, the conflation and reordering of events, as well as plain fiction. They aimed to recast the past into a meaningful narrative, rather than presenting a set of hard facts. They strove to render the past useful to the present: to use it to defend rights, possessions and privileges claimed by the monastery in question, or to emphasise its status and importance.

More specifically, foundation legends, whether written or told in pictorial form, were used to explain or justify the particular status of medieval monasteries. Existing within the world, monasteries had to negotiate a relationship with it; in particular, they needed to secure support and benefaction to guarantee their survival. Yet a monastery was also removed from the world; it was a sacred site, a 'gate of heaven', referencing the term used by Jacob to describe the house of God in the book of Genesis. A monastery was a symbol or pre-figuration of the Heavenly Jerusalem, populated by people who 'lived like angels'.⁴⁰ In short, accounts of the origins of such a community needed both to make clear its sacred nature, and also to guarantee the monastery's position in a network of terrestrial or secular relations. This could be achieved via foundation legends in a number of different ways, but it seems to have been most crucial to emphasise that the site of the monastery was revealed to the founder by a divine act of some kind; that miraculous events took place at the consecration of the church; and that the founders or early benefactors of the monastery were of particularly high status.⁴¹

If the St Werstan narrative is considered again, in light of these points, the episodes from which it was constructed meet closely the requirements of medieval foundation legends in general, emphasising divine revelation, royal

benefaction and saintly support. However, the story also goes further than this, fulfilling exactly the kind of ‘check-list’ of features that the community at Malvern specifically might have had in mind if creating an ideal foundation story, blending verifiable history with wishful possibilities.

To take each of the scenes in the Malvern narrative in turn, in the first (Fig. 4), the divine revelation of the site of the monastery is made explicit by the depiction of four angels, marking out a plot of land with corner stones, in a vision that comes to Werstan whilst he prays. The sacred tone of the event is emphasised further by the way in which Werstan is represented (see back cover image). Although the events that would make him a saint are still, at this point, in the future, he is nonetheless shown with a halo, whilst the scroll above his head reiterates the point, identifying him as ‘St Werstan martyr’. Not only, therefore, was the site of the religious foundation shown to be revealed through a divine act, but the founder to whom the vision was revealed was himself shown to be a saint.

More specifically, efforts seem to have been made to convey the idea that Werstan was a hermitical saint. He is shown kneeling in an open hillscape – apparently representing what Malmesbury termed ‘the wild woods of the Malvern Hills’ – and he wears a rough, brown garment that differentiates him from the Benedictine monks shown in other parts of the window who wear dark blue habits, as a substitute for Benedictine black.⁴² On the one hand, the decision to show Werstan as a hermit may have been conditioned by the fact that, as we have seen, there had been at least one hermit living in the Malvern hills in the period before the Conquest – the detail tied the legend to historical fact. On the other hand, hermits had a special relevance to monastic communities in the Middle Ages. The desert fathers had been the founders of monasticism, and their isolated existence remained an ideal for later communities. For Benedictine houses, like Great Malvern, in particular, the idea of the rejection of the world was at the heart of the Rule of St Benedict. He instructed that ‘the monastery should, if possible, be so arranged that all necessary things...may be within the enclosure, so that the monks may not be compelled to wander outside it, for that is not at all expedient for their souls’.⁴³

A further feature of interest in this first scene is the large, silvery-white key at the centre of the plot of land marked out by the angels. It can be interpreted in different ways, and it may have had a particular role in the foundation story that has, over time, been lost, but the idea that such a key indicated the spot of Werstan’s church seems particularly apt in the context of one well-known aspect of Malvern’s identity. The Benedictine priory was a daughter house of Westminster Abbey, whose coat of arms included the crossed silver and gold keys of St Peter, the abbey’s patron and legendary founder. This coat of arms appeared in the heraldry within the tracery of the Werstan window at Malvern, and it incorporated a large white key of exactly the same form as that in Werstan’s vision (Figs. 3–5). The aim was perhaps to emphasise Malvern’s ancient associations with one of the country’s most prestigious religious houses, as though a Westminster connection for the Benedictine priory was ‘prefigured’ in some way in the site’s earliest ‘history’.



Fig. 4 The Divine Revelation of a Site to St Werstan, from the Foundation Window, Great Malvern Priory. Reproduced by permission of English Heritage

In the second episode in the Werstan legend at Malvern (Fig. 6), four angels are shown to consecrate the newly-built chapel: one swings a censer, another sprinkles it with holy water, a third appears to be either blessing or installing

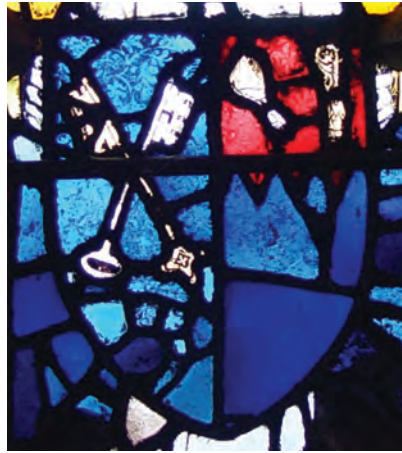


Fig. 5a, 5b Keys of the same design used in the Revelation of the Site to St Werstan (left) and the arms of Westminster Abbey (right), from a tracery opening above the Foundation Window, Great Malvern Priory. Copyright John Jones of Skycell

a bell. The fourth holds a cross-staff of the kind carried by the bishop at more conventional consecration ceremonies. One obvious function of this scene is to reiterate the sacred nature of this early foundation at Malvern, featuring angels rather than humans as the performers of the ritual crucial to transforming a church into a sacred institution; the sacred tone is underlined further by an image of Werstan as saint (see front cover). At Great Malvern, however, the decision to depict angels consecrating Werstan's chapel may have had a more contemporary, political significance. Taking the ritual out of human hands was perhaps informed by the priory's long battle in the late thirteenth century against the bishop of Worcester's claims of jurisdiction over the Benedictine house.⁴⁴ It implies that independence from episcopal authority had long been a part of Malvern's identity. By showing it to date back to the earliest religious foundation on the site, it can be read as reinforcing the priory's later claims.

The next scene in the narrative (Fig. 7), depicting Edward the Confessor's land grants to Werstan's community – represented by the sealed charter he holds in his right hand – continues the emphasis on the great sanctity of the foundation. As with Werstan in the previous scenes, Edward is shown as the saint he would later become. The scene also emphasises, however, the high status of the secular support enjoyed by the early foundation. Royal gifts were naturally prestigious in themselves, but kings also acted as the ultimate guarantor of all of a monastery's possessions. Indeed, it is possible that this scene at Malvern was intended to suggest that King Edward had a particularly close and personal interest in Werstan's community. Kneeling at St Edward's feet is a small figure,



Fig. 6 The Consecration by angels of St Werstan's chapel, from the Foundation Window, Great Malvern Priory. Reproduced by permission of English Heritage

named in the scroll above his head as one William Edward. His is not a name known to us from historical record, but it has been suggested that the inscription might be interpreted as meaning William, one of king Edward's clerics.⁴⁵ The



Fig. 7 The Donation of Edward the Confessor, from the Foundation Window, Great Malvern Priory. Reproduced by permission of English Heritage

scene might, therefore, be read as Edward entrusting to one of his personal priests the delivery of the donation charter; it is perhaps possible that it was intended to suggest that William was himself set to join Werstan's community.



Fig. 8 The Martyrdom of St Werstan, from the Foundation Window, Great Malvern Priory. Reproduced by permission of English Heritage

As we have already seen, the St Werstan narrative reaches its climax in the window's dramatic final scene (Fig. 8). The martyrdom of the hermit provides the ultimate sanctification of the site of the monastery. It also provides the

Malvern community with a saintly founder and ancestor. Indeed, the manner of Werstan's death at Malvern clearly references one of the most famous and distinctive slayings of the Middle Ages: that of Thomas Becket (Fig. 9). The mortal blow by a sword to the tonsured crown of Werstan's head is emphasised three-fold: by the enormous size of Werstan's head, relative to the chapel; by the very deliberate pointing of the figure on the right of the scene; and by the bright yellow blood that flows from the wound. This kind of paralleling of the death of a popular, well-known saint with that of the founder of a monastic house was not unique to Malvern. Medieval accounts of the foundation of Bury St Edmunds, for example, reported that St Edmund was tied to a tree and shot at with arrows, before his head was cut off; and the similarities between his death and that of St Sebastian were explicitly flagged (even though later examinations of Edmund's body found no evidence of arrow wounds).⁴⁶ At Benedictine Malvern, Becket as a model for its own founder-saint may have had a special appeal. Becket died whilst performing the divine office – of which the Benedictine order were the especial guardians – in the heart of England's oldest and arguably most significant Benedictine monastery.

Fifteenth-Century Malvern and The Significance of Deerhurst

These observations perhaps throw some light onto the question of why a legend about St Werstan should have been created by the monastic community at Malvern, as well as the particular way in which it was constructed and presented. What remains to be considered, however, is why the legend seems to have emerged or, at least, to have been most heavily promoted in the late Middle Ages, in the fifteenth century onwards; and also, whether there was any reason why Deerhurst, in particular, was incorporated into the legend.

Taking the question of the date the Werstan legend first emerged, events such as the loss of the Malvern library and archive, as well as the exceptional opportunity for telling the story offered by the rebuilding and reglazing programme at the priory, obviously affect our interpretation of when the legend might have been created. It is possible, for example, that Malvern produced a now-lost account of the priory's history and origins at an earlier point than the glass, which dates from between the 1430s and around 1450. Yet the 1318 record of the monastery's origins, noted above, which makes no mention of Werstan, means we should be wary of trying to push back the origins of the legend too far.

More generally, studies of monastic foundation legends in other parts of Europe have emphasised that such stories became especially important and were subject to most 'creativity' at periods of challenge, competition or stress for monastic communities.⁴⁷ This was certainly the case for the Benedictine order in late medieval England, in the period from around 1300 to the Dissolution of the monasteries two hundred and forty years later. The Benedictines were, by then, the most privileged and richly endowed monastic order in medieval England, and the most long-standing. Yet by the late Middle Ages, the Benedictines'



Fig. 9 Miniature of the martyrdom of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, from a Book of Hours, France (Rouen), c.1430-40, Harley 2900, f. 56v. By permission of the British Library

dominance was under threat. Competing orders, such as the Augustinians, the Cistercians and the mendicants had become increasingly popular, and there were other, more fashionable channels for religious patronage, such as chantry foundations or university colleges. Recent research has shown that the Benedictines responded to these threats with impressive imagination and creativity. In particular, they emphasised the ancient origins of the order and its long history of high status support in England. They made a virtue of being the old, established order: it distinguished them from their newer competitors, and suggested that any spiritual investment made with them would be a secure one.⁴⁸ To emphasise and communicate their message, Benedictine communities wrote and illustrated extensive histories of their houses. They set them up in extended, stained glass narratives, such as those (beyond Malvern) recorded in the cloisters at Gloucester, Peterborough, Worcester and possibly Whitby; they erected new monuments commemorating past benefactors, all the while weaving historical fact with how they would have liked history to be.

It is clear that, in the late Middle Ages, the community at Great Malvern was very much involved in exactly this kind of concern to demonstrate, promote and create a long and impressive history for itself. It can be seen in a number of ways. Most visually striking is the retention of the late eleventh-century pier arcade in the nave during the fifteenth-century reconstruction programme (Fig. 10). It cannot be known exactly why this part of the church was not rebuilt, but



Fig. 10 Great Malvern Priory, looking east, showing in the foreground the retained Romanesque arcade in the nave, and the re-worked, Perpendicular choir beyond.
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it emphasises effectively, nonetheless, the priory's antiquity: its squat, heavy solidity contrasting dramatically with the newer, slender, transparent architecture surrounding it.

In addition to antiquity, Malvern also emphasised its high status connections. It has already been suggested, for example, that the prominent figure of Edward the Confessor, and the detail of the large white key in the St Werstan window, may have been intended to highlight Malvern's relationship, as a daughter house, with Westminster Abbey. This relationship was also advertised in other ways, in the stained glass shields of the arms of Westminster and the attributed arms of the Confessor put up in the choir clerestory, and in further images of the Confessor in other parts of the glass: he was part of a representation of the litany of the saints, for example, set up in windows donated by the Malvern monks themselves in the south nave aisle.

This emphasis on Westminster is significant as, in practice, Malvern operated essentially independently from the abbey.⁴⁹ Yet there was, at least, a relationship between Malvern and Westminster for the priory to manipulate. Elsewhere, the Malvern monks may have turned their hand to forgery to give the impression of an impressive association. In the Bodleian Library, Oxford, is an early medieval copy of Cassian's *Collationes* (MS Hatton 23), originally containing on its opening page an inscription describing the book as the gift of Thomas Becket of Canterbury 'to the prior and convent of the church of Worcester'. Some centuries later, the word 'Worcester' was replaced with 'Malvern'.⁵⁰ The substitution may have been designed simply to record the passing of the volume from Worcester, but it is also possible that it was intended to give the impression that the community at Malvern had itself been the recipient of a personal gift from the head of one of the Benedictine order's most significant houses, who also became one of the country's most popular saints.

These efforts at Malvern to promote its ancient and high-status history in the fifteenth century provide important context for the creation and promotion of the St Werstan legend. Indeed, the window narrating the legend, overlooking the very focal point of the priory's religious life, was Malvern's most spectacular and prominent example of its engagement with the monastery's history and origins.

Finally, the question of Deerhurst's role in the kind of image of itself Malvern may have wished to project in the late Middle Ages needs to be addressed. Was there a particular reason why, by Leland's time, St Werstan was said to come from Deerhurst?

On the one hand, there are early historical links between Deerhurst and Malvern. It is well known that in the middle of the eleventh century, Earl Odda, one of the country's most significant political figures, built a small chapel alongside the monastery at Deerhurst to commemorate his brother.⁵¹ Odda was also remembered as a benefactor of the pre-Conquest foundation at Malvern. Indeed, one account describes him, not Edward the Confessor, as providing the site itself for Malvern's first church.⁵² Subsequently, the Confessor involved

both Deerhurst and Malvern in his foundation at Westminster. Malvern became the abbey's daughter house, whilst lands that had belonged to Odda at Deerhurst were given to Westminster.⁵³

On the other hand, in addition to these historical links, it is worth speculating that Deerhurst also took on an importance at Great Malvern Priory when it was piecing together the various elements of the St Werstan legend for another reason: the priory set about creating the legend of St Werstan, itself, it was argued above, apparently set in the 1050s, in the context of a revival of interest in England of the country's Anglo-Saxon past. Traditionally, revival of enthusiasm for England's Anglo-Saxon identity has been most strongly associated with the English Reformation, when the break with Rome led to a search for the origins of a Church of England in the pre-Conquest past. More recent research, however, has refined this view, emphasising that interest in Anglo-Saxon England was also a feature of medieval culture. Anglo-Saxon law codes influenced Norman and Angevin lawmaking; and popular literary works were set in the period. The cults of Anglo-Saxon saints continued to flourish, and their lives were included in hagiographical collections produced throughout the Middle Ages. It was inside the country's monasteries that links with Anglo-Saxon England were arguably kept particularly alive. Books from the period itself remained in monastic libraries, and they continued to be consulted and used by their communities; they were annotated or glossed, and translated into contemporary English or Latin.⁵⁴ Significantly, when considering how Malvern may have viewed the Anglo-Saxon period, it has been suggested that one of the founders of the priory, St Wulfstan of Worcester became a focal point for medieval interest in Old England. In fact, as the only pre-Conquest bishop permitted to keep his post after the Conquest, Wulfstan was so important to the sense of an English national identity which began to emerge as England's kings became more permanently resident here, rather than in France, that King John (1199–1216) requested that he should be buried at Worcester alongside him.⁵⁵

Yet beyond John's burial – and some subsequent royal interest in particular royal Anglo-Saxon saints – some of the most interesting and broadly-based evidence for an Anglo-Saxon revival dates from much later in the Middle Ages, to the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: very close to the time when the Werstan legend was put up at Malvern. At Canterbury, for example, Prior Chillenden (1391–1411) ornamented the high altar and the altars of Saints Dunstan and Alphege 'with work of silver and gold, and wood curiously carved'. A list of gifts to the church recorded richly embroidered altar frontals and candelabras made for the same saints; and it is recorded that monks at the priory began to take the names Dunstan and Alphege. The community also gathered together materials on the relics, lives and miracles relating to the saints, and found itself in a fierce dispute with the community at Glastonbury, also claiming Dunstan's relics as part of its own revival of interest in its Anglo-Saxon past.⁵⁶

In this context, the attraction to Malvern of being able to claim a connection with Deerhurst is perhaps self-evident. As can still be seen, the church advertises its Anglo-Saxon identity in its architecture and sculptural details exceptionally

clearly. Whilst it cannot be claimed that Malvern's monks would have been able to date Deerhurst precisely, it seems that Deerhurst was recognised in the Middle Ages as being particularly ancient. William of Malmesbury, writing in the early twelfth century, noted (in not entirely flattering terms) its 'appearance of empty antiquity',⁵⁷ and it must have been even more remarkably so as the centuries passed.

Deerhurst had, of course, also been institutionally significant in the Anglo-Saxon period. Key regional leaders were probably buried here as early as the first half of the ninth century. We have seen already that in 1016, King Cnut of Denmark and King Edmund Ironside met and made peace here; and that Deerhurst was the principal residence of one of the leading figures of Edward the Confessor's reign.⁵⁸ Yet perhaps most important to a community such as Malvern was the fact that Deerhurst was associated with one of the most popular Anglo-Saxon saints of the Middle Ages: St Alphege. In addition to his continued following at Canterbury in particular, Alphege was also included in late medieval collections of popular lives, such as the *South English Legendary*, and he found his way into other prestigious artistic commissions of the fifteenth century.⁵⁹ He was illustrated in the Sherborne Missal, for example, and featured in the series of kings and ecclesiastics installed in the library of All Souls College, Oxford, by its founder, Archbishop Chichele.⁶⁰ At Malvern, Alphege appeared in the litany of saints set up in the north nave clerestory, and may also have been included in the windows of the south choir aisle. Indeed, if we look again at what we know about the Werstan story, it seems that Alphege's life might have been one model Malvern had in mind for the saint. Leland tells us that Deerhurst 'was destroyed by the Danes. Werstanus fledde thens, as it is seyde, to Malverne'. The Malvern window shows us that Werstan took to the Malvern hills as a hermit, and gathered a small religious community around him, before he was murdered by invaders. Alphege also began his religious career at Deerhurst; after a few years of devoted service he left the monastery to live the life of a hermit, before founding a religious community at Bath, and eventually being martyred at Greenwich as archbishop of Canterbury.

The reference in Leland to Danes destroying Deerhurst, and any relation this had to Werstan leaving the monastery, is problematic, as has already been noted. Obviously, if Werstan came to Malvern during the reign of Edward the Confessor, as seems to be the case, then it cannot historically have been the result of Danish attacks at Deerhurst, given that that this kind of activity must have stopped by 1016, years before Edward came to the throne. It is worth speculating, therefore, whether an association between Werstan and the Danes might have been the result of an attempt by Malvern to emphasise Werstan's similarity to Alphege. Of all the English monastic saints, Alphege is the one most directly associated with Danish devastation. In 1011, as archbishop of Canterbury, Alphege was taken by the Danes and imprisoned for months, until one night, his drunken captors took him out and pelted him to death, with the fatal blow delivered (as it was for Werstan) directly to his head.⁶¹

Conclusion

To summarise, even on the basis of just two references in Leland and one window at Great Malvern, the legend of St Werstan represents an impressively skilful and sophisticated exercise in late medieval monastic mythmaking. Mixing verifiable history with wishful thinking and established models of foundation and saintly behaviour, it creates an image of the past as the priory imaginatively remembered it to be. The fact that the Werstan legend cannot be entirely historically ‘true’ does not render it less important or interesting. Indeed, it can be argued that it makes it so much more so: it provides real insight into how monasteries like Malvern used and reinterpreted their past to meet the demands of the present at a time when they faced intense competition and criticism.

The only remaining question is, did the legend ‘work’? Was the effort Malvern made to create an image of itself as an illustrious and ancient foundation, with the Werstan legend and Deerhurst at its centre, worth it? Even five hundred years later, I think it can safely be said that it was. Although now largely fragmentary, the dozens of images of kneeling figures, representing the priory’s donors and benefactors, that were put up in almost every one of the church’s windows during the fifteenth-century reconstruction campaign are compelling testimony (Fig. 11).⁶² They all liked what Malvern had to offer enough to part with their cash and make an investment, both financial and spiritual, in St Werstan and his saintly colleagues depicted in the glazing scheme.⁶³



Fig. 11 Thomas Carter, accompanied by a monk, from the glazing of the choir clerestory at Great Malvern Priory: one of the many dozens of such figures which originally lined the church's windows. Copyright John Jones of Skycell

NOTES

- 1 This theme is continued by Martin Heale, *Deerhurst Priory in the Later Middle Ages*, Deerhurst Lecture 2011 (Deerhurst, forthcoming, 2015).
- 2 A recent full study of the stained glass at Great Malvern Priory, which summarises the foundation and early history of the church and its site, can be found in H. Gilderdale Scott, 'The Painted Glass of Great Malvern Priory (Worcs.), c. 1430–c. 1500', unpublished PhD thesis, Courtauld Institute of Art, London University, 2008.
- 3 William of Malmesbury, *Gesta pontificum Anglorum*, I: *Text and Translation*, ed. M. Winterbottom, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 2007), IV.145 (p. 434).
- 4 The Conqueror's grants were largely confirmations of those made earlier by Edward the Confessor, confirmed and recorded in turn in charters of Henry I dated 1127. These documents are calendared in *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum*, II: 1100–1135, ed. C. Johnson and H. A. Cronne (Oxford, 1956), nos. 1489–90 (pp. 206–7), and printed in W. Dugdale (ed. J. Caley, H. Ellis and B. Bandinel), *Monasticon Anglicanum*, vol. III (London, 1846), pp. 447–8.
- 5 Neither Bernard, earl of Hereford, nor William, earl of Gloucester, are mentioned in the (admittedly few) extant charters or references to the lands held by the priory and their donors. Indeed, there seems never to have been a Bernard, earl of Hereford. As Michael Hare has kindly suggested in conversation, it is possible that the reference may be intended for Bernard of Neufmarché (whose daughter married Miles, earl of Hereford), or perhaps Bernard and William together represent William fitzOsbern, earl of Hereford (d.1071). Osbern Fitzpons' donation is confirmed in the Henrician charters cited in note 4.
- 6 'Capella S. Iohannis Baptiste vicina prioratui, ubi S. Werstanus martyrium pertulit': John Leland, *De Rebus Britannicis Collectanea*, ed. T. Hearne (London, 1770), vol. I, p. 65.
- 7 John Leland, *Itinerary*, ed. L. T. Smith (London, 1964), vol. IV, p. 134.
- 8 The Werstan window attracted attention from the earliest accounts of the Malvern glazing, and received its first full study by Albert Way, as 'The Legend of St Werstan and the First Christian Establishment at Great Malvern', *Archaeological Journal*, 2 (1846), pp. 48–65. G. McNeill Rushforth considered the available evidence in his *Medieval Christian Imagery as Illustrated by the Painted Windows of Great Malvern Priory Church, Worcestershire* (Oxford, 1936), pp. 120–9. Most recently the legend has received the attention of C. Weaver and B. Osborne, in *The Illumination of St Werstan the Martyr* (Malvern, 2006).
- 9 See above, note 3.
- 10 See above, note 4.
- 11 For Edward's visits to Gloucester, see M. Hare, 'Kings, crowns and festivals: the origins of Gloucester as a royal ceremonial centre', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, vol. 115 (1997), pp. 41–78, at 52, 54; the suggestion of Edward's subsequent donation to Malvern is Rushforth's in his *Medieval Christian Imagery*, p. 127.
- 12 The Confessor's love of hunting is referenced throughout accounts of his life. See, for example, F. Barlow, *Edward the Confessor* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1970), pp. 69, 131, 133, 168, 205, 234, 260, 343. On royal grants of land on the west bank of the Severn to early religious communities, see S. Bassett, *The origins of the parishes of the Deerhurst area*, Deerhurst Lecture 1997 (Deerhurst, 1998), pp. 7–8.
- 13 *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* [hereafter ASC] MS D s.a. 1050 for 1049: see D. Whitelock with D. C. Douglas and S. I. Tucker (ed. and trans.), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: a revised translation* (London, 1961), p. 114.
- 14 ASC MS D s.a. 1052: see Whitelock *et al.*, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 122.
- 15 ASC MSS CDE s. a. 1055: see Whitelock *et al.*, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, pp. 130–1.
- 16 ASC MSS CD s.a. 1056: see Whitelock *et al.*, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, pp. 132–3.

- 17 My thanks go to Michael Hare for bringing these examples to my attention. They may all be found in the database of the Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England website s.n. Wærstan (<http://www.pase.ac.uk>, last accessed 8 December 2011).
- 18 His use of ‘thens’ is ambiguous and may be interpreted either as ‘from that place’, which does not necessarily link Werstan’s flight with a Danish attack, or ‘therefore’, which does.
- 19 The date and sequencing of Deerhurst’s architecture has a long history of debate. It used to be thought that a major rebuilding campaign took place in the late tenth century, but this is now revised. See R. N. Bailey, *Anglo-Saxon Sculptures at Deerhurst*, Deerhurst Lecture 2002 (Deerhurst, 2005); M. Hare and M. Kneen, ‘The church of St Mary, Deerhurst, Gloucestershire in the ninth century’, in P. S. Barnwell and S. Brown (eds.), *Places of Worship in Britain and Ireland, 300–950*, Rewley House Studies in the Historic Environment (Donington, forthcoming, 2015), 184–206.
- 20 These are summarised in Weaver and Osborne, *St Werstan*, pp. 14–15.
- 21 *The Victoria History of the County of Gloucester*, vol. II (London, 1907), p. 103; Rushforth, *Medieval Christian Imagery*, p. 125.
- 22 See T. Licence, *Hermits and Recluses in English Society, 950–1200* (Oxford, 2011), Chapter 2 (‘The rise of the hermit in England’); Aldwin and his followers at Malvern are considered on pp. 53–6.
- 23 See J. Blair, ‘A Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Saints’, in A. Thacker and R. Sharpe (eds.), *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 495–565.
- 24 Weaver and Osborne, *St Werstan*, pp. 12–13. However, S. J. Ridyard, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1988), highlights the complexity of Norman attitudes to English saints, noting (p. 251) that ‘the most striking attribute of the Norman churchmen is not their scepticism towards, their contempt of or their hostility to the English saints: rather it is their businesslike readiness to make the heroes of the past serve the politics of the present.’
- 25 R. M. Thomson, *William of Malmesbury*, 2nd ed. (Woodbridge, 2003), p. 37, notes Walcher, prior of Malvern (1120–35) as one of the scholars and monks met in the course of his travels, mentioned by Malmesbury himself. For the ‘wild woods’, see above, note 3.
- 26 William of Malmesbury, *Gesta pontificum*, IV.158 (ed. Winterbottom, p. 450).
- 27 *Register of Bishop Godfrey Giffard*, ed. J. W. Willis Bund (Oxford, 1902), vol. II, p. 178; for the Latin text see Dugdale, *Monasticon*, vol. III, p. 440.
- 28 Dugdale, *Monasticon*, vol. III, p. 447.
- 29 Rushforth, *Medieval Christian Imagery*, pp. 132–3. As Michael Hare points out, this tradition might also be related to the fact that the Beauchamps, descendants of Urse, were patrons of Malvern: see E. Mason, *St Wulfstan of Worcester c.1008–1095* (Oxford, 1990), p. 267 and *The Beauchamp Cartulary Charters 1100–1268*, ed. E. Mason, Pipe Roll Society, new ser. 43 (London, 1980), p. xvi. For the Domesday Book entry, see F. and C. Thorn (eds.), *Domesday Book*, 16: *Worcestershire* (Chichester, 1982), no. 8,10.
- 30 Indeed, the 1318 account of Malvern Priory’s origins associates the foundation of a Benedictine priory with the abbot of Westminster, not the bishop of Worcester.
- 31 B. Smith, *A History of Malvern* (Worcester, 1964), p. 42.
- 32 Gilderdale Scott, ‘Great Malvern Priory’, p. 402.
- 33 M. Southall, *Description of Malvern*, 2nd ed. (London, 1825), p. 51.
- 34 See above, note 6.
- 35 See, in particular, A. Gransden, *Legends, Traditions and History in Medieval England* (London, 1992).
- 36 See *ibid.*, ‘The Growth of the Glastonbury Traditions and Legends in the Twelfth Century’, pp. 153–74.

- 37 A version of the chronicle was printed in William Dugdale's *Monasticon Anglicanum* (1655) and translated by the Gloucestershire antiquary, Robert Atkyns (1712). Atkyns' translation is quoted here, as found in C. Heighway, 'Tewkesbury before the Normans', in R. K. Morris and R. Shoesmith (eds.), *Tewkesbury Abbey: History, Art and Architecture* (Little Logaston, 2003), p. 5.
- 38 Heighway, 'Tewkesbury before the Normans', pp. 5–6.
- 39 A. Goodrich Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past: Monastic Foundation Legends in Medieval Southern France* (Ithaca, 1995) is a key 'synthetic' work, as opposed to the numerous individual studies that have been made, and particularly suitable as comparative material for Great Malvern in focusing on Benedictine communities, but interest in the subject continues. Work by Amanda Dotseth of the Courtauld Institute of Art, for example, focuses on monastic foundation legends in medieval Spain.
- 40 Ibid., p. 21.
- 41 See Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past*, Chapter 2 ('The Legendary Process'), pp. 42–86.
- 42 Rushforth, *Medieval Christian Imagery*, p. 123, first noted the hermitical connotations of Werstan's dress.
- 43 J. McCann, *The Rule of St Benedict* (London, 1976), p. 74.
- 44 This episode in Great Malvern priory's history is recounted in many volumes, but is summarised fully and the relevant sources collated in Smith, *A History of Malvern*, pp. 47–53.
- 45 Rushforth, *Medieval Christian Imagery*, p. 128.
- 46 Gransden, *Legends, Traditions and History*, pp. 81–106, examines the nature and development over the course of the Middle Ages of the legends and traditions concerning the origins of Bury St Edmunds Abbey.
- 47 Remensnyder, *Monastic Foundation Legends*, pp. 3, 215–88, and 'Conclusion'. p. 289.
- 48 Benedictine response to competition in late medieval England forms a central theme of J. Luxford, *The Art and Architecture of English Benedictine Monasteries, 1300–1540: A Patronage History* (Woodbridge, 2005). See in particular pp. 119–50 on the nature of, and responses to, competition.
- 49 M. Heale, *The Dependent Priors of Medieval English Monasteries* (Woodbridge, 2004), p. 100.
- 50 F. Madan, H. H. E. Craster and N. Denholm-Young, *A Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford*, vol. II, pt. 2 (Oxford, 1937), p. 847.
- 51 A. Williams, *Land, power and politics: the family and career of Odda of Deerhurst*, Deerhurst Lecture 1996 (Deerhurst, 1997); J. Higgitt, *Odda, Orm and Others: Patrons and inscriptions in later Anglo-Saxon England*, Deerhurst Lecture 1999 (Deerhurst, 2004).
- 52 See above, note 26; for comment, see Williams, *Land, power and politics*, pp. 11–12.
- 53 Noted in Rushforth, *Medieval Christian Imagery*, p. 127, n. 5. See also C. S. Taylor, 'Deerhurst, Pershore and Westminster', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 25 (1902), pp. 230–50; Williams, *Land, power and politics*, pp. 7–10.
- 54 C. Cannon, 'Monastic Productions', in D. Wallace (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 322–4.
- 55 A. J. Frantzen and J. D. Niles, *Anglo-Saxonism and the Construction of Social Identity* (Gainesville, FL, 1997), p. 5.
- 56 N. Ramsay and M. Sparks, 'The Cult of St Dunstan at Christ Church, Canterbury', in N. Ramsay, M. Sparks and T. Tatton-Brown (eds.), *St Dunstan, his Life, Times and Cult* (1992), pp. 311–23, at 320–3.
- 57 William of Malmesbury, *Gesta pontificum*, II.76 (ed. Winterbottom, p. 266) describes Deerhurst as 'antiquitatis inane simulacrum'.

- 58 The creation of the Tewkesbury Founders' Book, noted above, compiled by one of the abbey's monks in the early sixteenth century is, of course, a parallel example, of the appropriation of Deerhurst's Anglo-Saxon identity by a Benedictine community in the late Middle Ages.
- 59 For St Alphege's life as it appears in the South English Legendary see C. D'Evelyn and A. J. Mill (eds.), *The South English Legendary*, 3 vols., Early English Text Society 235, 236, 244 (London, 1956–9), I, pp. 148–55.
- 60 K. L. Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts, 1390–1490*, vol. II (London, 1996), p. 49; F. E. Hutchinson, *Medieval Glass at All Souls College* (London, 1949), pp. 54–8, pl. xxvii.
- 61 For the *South English Legendary*, see note 59 above. Osbern's late-eleventh-century life is printed in H. Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, vol. 2 (London, 1691), pp. 122–48; there is a translation by F. Shaw, *Osbern's Life of Alfege* (London, 1999). On the early accounts of Alphege's martyrdom, see N. Brooks with A. Thacker, *St Ælfheah (St Alphege) from Deerhurst to Martyrdom (1012): some Millennial Reflections on Religious Ideals*, Deerhurst Lecture 2012 (Deerhurst, 2014).
- 62 For details and discussion of these figures see Gilderdale Scott, 'Great Malvern Priory', in particular pp. 44, 145–58.
- 63 I am extremely grateful to the Vicar, Churchwardens and Parochial Church Council of Great Malvern for their ongoing generosity in allowing the reproduction of images of the church and its windows.

THE ANNUAL DEERHURST LECTURE

The Annual Deerhurst Lecture was established by the late Arnold Porter in 1984 on the model of the annual Jarrow Lecture. The lecture takes place in St Mary's Church, Deerhurst and is managed by the Committee of The Friends of Deerhurst Church in cooperation with the Parochial Church Council of Deerhurst with Apperley.

The lecture is normally given on a topic relating to recent research into the history and archaeology of the early medieval period, though occasional lectures concern later periods. The principal focus of the lecture is often, though not invariably, Deerhurst itself with its two early churches: the parish church of St Mary, probably built in the early 9th century, and the chapel of the Holy Trinity (known as Odda's Chapel), dedicated in 1056.

The lecture is usually given on the middle Saturday of September. Details of the next lecture to be given are normally available on the website of the Friends of Deerhurst Church at <http://deerhurstfriends.co.uk/lectures-events/>.

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